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# THRUST

fall 1984 / winter 1985

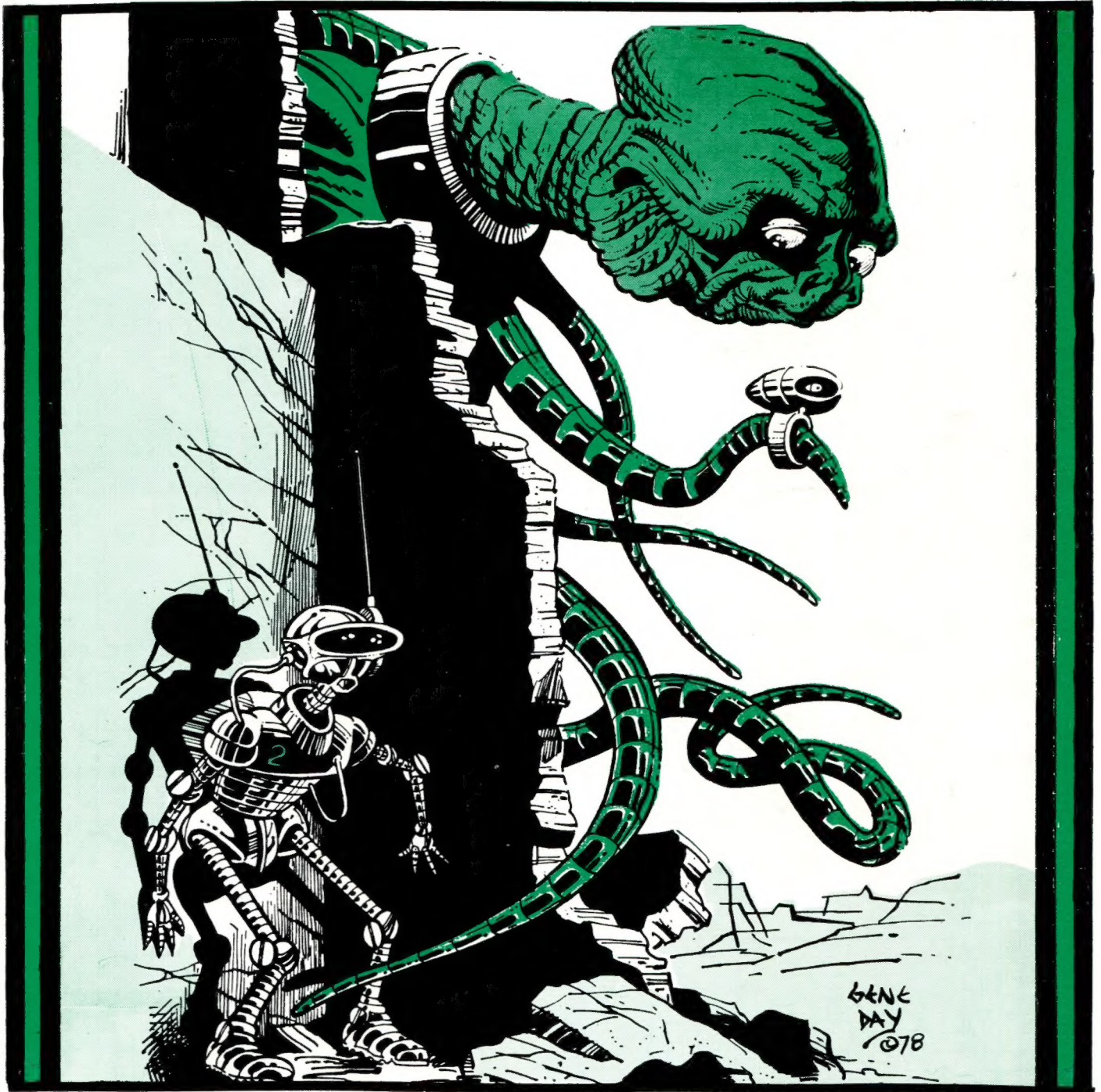
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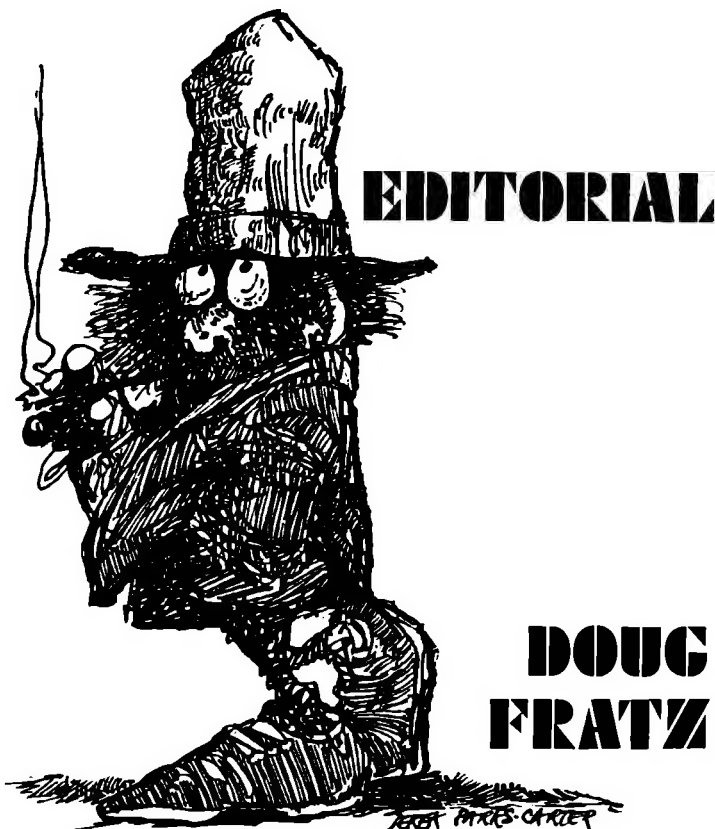
Michael Bishop

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Ted White

Contributing Editors



Welcome to THRUST #21, the first in a long series of just-about-exactly-on-time issues of this magazine. I do indeed plan to impress even myself with the punctual, twice-yearly appearance of THRUST. (Come to think of it, I may be the only one impressed with a two-issues-per-year rate of publication!)

**The Issue At Hand:** Besides being almost on time and all, I think you'll find a lot more about this issue you'll like. But before I get to what's inside, a few words about this issue's cover.

This issue's cover art is by Gene Day. Many of you may remember Gene's work from previous issues of THRUST, including his cover for issue #11 from 1978. Gene also had two science fiction art books printed, *Future Day* (SF comic strips), published by Flying Buttress Publications, and *All Things Dark and Dangerous* (black and white art prints, mostly SF), published by his own Shadow Press. Both were published in 1979, and are undoubtedly out of print by now. Gene Day was one of comic fandom's best young professional artists of recent vintage, and was beginning to make a name for himself in professional comic books. I say "was" because Gene died in 1982, to everyone's shock and dismay. Gene had submitted several excellent pieces of SF art at THRUST between 1978 and 1981. This issue's cover is the last of the Gene Day artwork that I have on file. I wish I could have used it sooner.

This issue's lead interview is with Jack Dann, another of the small but highly noticeable group of brilliant, young stylists who entered the field in the 1970's--a group primarily characterized by their frequent appearance on Nebula Award ballots, and infrequent appearance on Hugo Award nomination ballots. What I find most amazing is that throughout the entire interview, both interviewer Gregory Feeley and interviewee Jack Dann seem to be interacting on the exact same mental wavelength. Seldom do interviewer and interviewee seem to be so compatible. And incidentally, the fantasy short story mentioned by Dann near the end of the interview, "Bad Medicine," is in the October 1984 ASIMOV'S, and it's well worth picking up.

Ted White is the only one of THRUST's regular columnists to appear this issue. Ted's "My Column" takes an ambivalent look at the recent fantasy boom--is it diluting the precious bodily fluids of SF as some are claiming, or sparking a healthy new renaissance of imaginative literature? (Hey, wait a minute. Ted White, ambivalent? Could Ted be mellowing in his old age?)

Our second interview is with that well-known master of hard science fiction, and incessant collaborator, Larry Niven. Like our other interview this issue, it was conducted a couple of years ago--before Niven wrote *The Integral Tree*, his latest novel, available now in hardcover from Del Rey.

THRUST has two new columnists this issue, although both are very familiar names to readers of this magazine. Darrell Schweitzer, long-time THRUST reviewer and interviewer, begins his new science fiction and fantasy movie review column by looking at a number of the SF&F films which appeared over the last year. Darrell thereby earns the title as our newest Contributing Editor. (Your name will be on the title-page next issue Darrell, I promise.) The other new columnist should be even more familiar to THRUST readers--it's me. I have decided to revive my column, entitled "The Alienated Critic," which I began in the early days of THRUST, and discontinued in recent years to make room for other material. The format may vary issue to issue, but the column will primarily be aimed towards covering a large number of topics, both great and small, which catch my attention and interest. Reviving this column in THRUST, I felt, was the best way to relieve my urge to write more, without the constant anxieties of potential editorial rejection. (Some of you who have looked closely at this issue's cover may think I have gone a bit far, however, in putting my own name on the cover of the issue--editorial narcissism, you say. But what happened is that I just ran out of names this issue. Honest!)

This issue also includes the anxiously awaited results of the **Third Annual Thrust Awards** for 1983, once again feteing the most disappointing SF books and magazines, and worst dramatic presentations to hit the SF/Fantasy scene last year. This year's winners are Robert Silverberg's *Valentine Pontifex* (Most Disappointing Novel), Isaac Asimov's *Winds of Change* (Most Disappointing Collection), *AMAZING* and *ANALOG* (tie, Most Disappointing Magazine), and *Superman III* (Worst Dramatic Presentation). See page 19 for the full scoop. This year's **Thrust Awards** are based on 19 ballots, a new high!

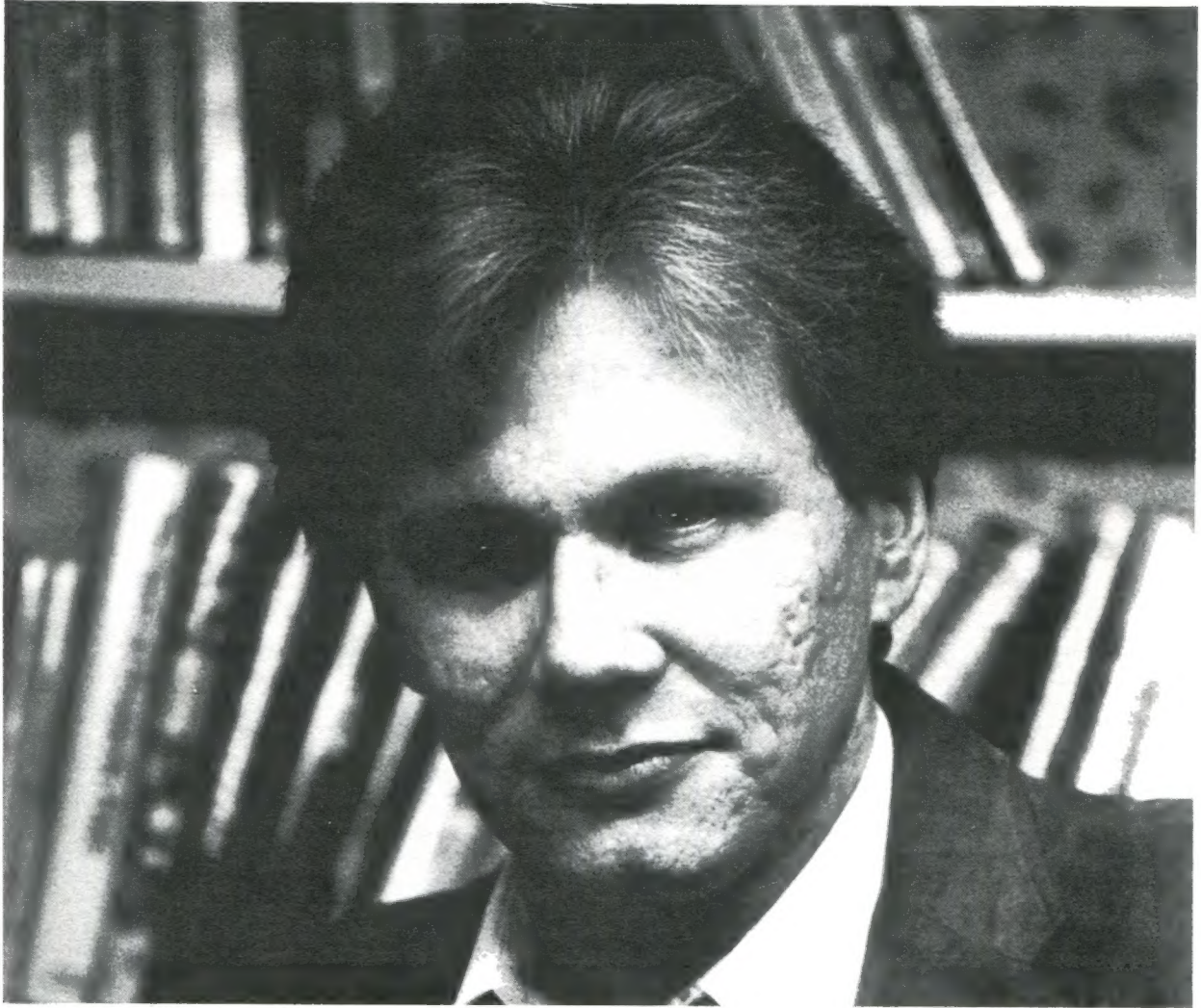
**Thrust Enters The Computer Age!** The more astute observers among you may have already noticed that the type in this issue of THRUST looks a bit different than past issues. That is because THRUST is no longer professionally typeset, the costs of which were threatening to force me into bankruptcy, and instead, type is being set right in THRUST's own offices using a microcomputer, word processing software, and a letter-quality daisy wheel printer. For the computer buffs among you (others can skip the next few lines), the computer is a Sanyo MBC-555-2 (IBM compatible) with dual 360k disk drives and 128k RAM, the word processing software is WordStar, the operating system MS-DOS 2.11, and the printer a Transtar 120P.

Computing is great. I never got along well with mainframes, but adapted to the various and sundry software I got free with this machine (about \$1500 worth, if list prices can be believed) almost immediately. Even just as a typesetter, this machine would be worth its price to me and Thrust Publications, but I now have it doing all kinds of other things, the only one of which may be noticeable to Thrust's readers being the mailing labels on the envelopes in which you receive THRUST (if you get THRUST by mail, that is.)

We'll be back in March with THRUST #22. Until then, keep those card and letters (and **money**) coming. - DDF

# ECHOS OF THE FUTURE: an interview with

Photo ©1984 by Bernard Sheredy



## JACK DANN

CONDUCTED BY GREGORY FEELEY

Jack Dann became generally recognized as a writer of importance in the late seventies, though he published his first story in 1970 and was producing work of distinction within three years. By 1975 he had achieved something of a mastery of the shorter science fiction forms with stories such as "The Dybbuk Dolls" and "Timetipping". Although never a prolific writer, Jack Dann has published a number of dense, highly original stories, including the novel **Starhiker**, whose stylistic beauty, individuality of form, and uncompromising fidelity to their own less accessible natures contrasted sharply with the fashion in the mid-

seventies for future histories, novels expanded from award-winning shorter works, serials, series, and artlessly long "epics".

Even more radical was Dann's singular unsentimentality--a characteristic rarer even in good SF than one would think before encountering the real thing--and his unflinching dramatization of the darker aspects of human nature, which, more than his stories' seeming difficulty, probably account for the coolness of their initial reception. But even if Dann missed the mid-seventies boom in commercial SF (and its attendant heyday of five-figure advances), his

work found markets, was occasionally anthologized, nominated for the Nebula Award (but never the Hugo), and was collected in 1980 in **Timetriping**, which proved unexpectedly popular. Dann also became well known as an editor of superior anthologies. He published little fiction during 1978-1980 as he worked on an ambitious novel, **The Man Who Melted**. Completion of that novel may have sparked a release of creative energies, and 1981 saw publication of a variety of stories by Dann, including his second novel, **Junction**, long in inventory at Dell.

The following interview was conducted during a Science Fiction Writers of America function in New York in November 1981, shortly after the completion of **The Man Who Melted**. That novel, his longest, Dann sees as a turning point in his work. In this interview, Dann looks beyond it to a number of essentially different books he intends to write, including SF collaborations with Gardner Dozois and Jay Haldeman; another SF novel, **Distances**; a borderline fantasy, **The Carbon Dreamer**, based on a story sold to **The Last Dangerous Visions** ten years ago; and two contemporary novels: **Extra Duty**, concerning life in a military school, and **Counting Coup**.

-----

**Thrust:** Both **Starhiker** and **Junction** seem to adopt their structures from the mythic folk tale Joseph Campbell calls the "Hero Journey": the story of a resourceful young man who leaves his provincial homeland to journey through successive worlds of increasing wonder, from which he returns, after triumphing over adversity, as a figure of eminence. An earlier story, "The Marks of Painted Teeth," evokes a wide range of mythic ritual, most familiarly that concerning the eating and rebirth of the slain god. For one who has written almost no straight fantasy, you seem unusually attracted by subjects that surpass the conventional boundaries of the rational. Is this a deliberate artistic goal?

**Dann:** **Starhiker** was originally conceived to be a quick adventure novel. I adapted a quest framework for it, and the first chapter came very quickly. I was offered a contract and settled down to write a book, but I got bored. I just wasn't really interested in doing an adventure novel. So what I did is, I kept inserting things that were interesting to me; this is, I kept giving myself problems for the protagonist to solve. These problems entailed the development of consciousness, which has been a pattern throughout my work, something that has started changing just very recently. So what was originally supposed to be an adventure quest framework became, for me, the quest for evolving consciousness. The same is true in "Painted Teeth"; however, I was not conscious of that while I was writing it. When I first started writing, I was writing to be **sane**. In other words, I was writing to help myself work out things I didn't even understand. What I see in retrospect was: I was a late bloomer, and I feel quite frankly that I came to what I consider "consciousness" late. When I look back on my past, I can remember how I viscerally felt about the world, and it was as if I were 90% blind. In retrospect, my work has been, I think, an attempt to deal with consciousness. But when I started out I was not conscious of this, so with "Painted Teeth" the story was born, like an organism, fully structured and formed. **Junction**, on the other hand, was conscious work, in that I knew what I was doing. However, I was dissatisfied with the original, short version because the ending was internalized. It made sense only in a dreamlike, subjective form. **Junction** is a journey to that consciousness of dreams, and in that way, I believe it has true coherence. In other words, it is a mapping out of that side, right brain or whatever you want to call it, where intuitive, undiscerned, but not less essential activities of the mind go on. In the novella, it was done as it intuitively felt right, but it did not bear enough reference

to the objective world, and that's what I tried to clear up in the novel version.

**Thrust:** Nevertheless, you printed a version of the original "Junction" in **Timetriping**, suggesting that you regard the shorter version as a variant of the story, and not just a text that the novel has supplanted.

**Dann:** Yes, I felt that the original urge that produced the novella, which came out at a rate of fifteen pages a day, was valid and I wanted to retain that. The novel is an expansion, with additions, but it is fundamentally different in the way it tries to reach into the objective world. When I write something, I see it essentially as the tracks of where I have been. So when I have done something, I leave it at that and go on. It's almost like living in the eternal present. Previous work is merely my record of where I have been. The novella was done in a different stage in terms of the way I was feeling about the material. So I left it there. I've always seen myself as a process. When I looked back upon the work and saw that it didn't do what I would like it to do now, that never bothered me because the whole idea of fiction for me is the act, the process of reaching, pushing through to something else. I always feel like a student. Many other writers feel that after they become master of a certain form, they must hold or strengthen their position at that successful level. Although writing is something for which you have to have a sort of enormous ego, for me it's a very bizarre composition of ego and a true humbleness, because I always have in mind that numinous ideal which I can't reach at that time, and never will.

**Thrust:** Which can only imperfectly be realized in a finished work.

**Dann:** Yes. It's very Platonic, actually.

**Thrust:** Your mention of an "eternal present" is interesting, because Jung's concept of *unus mundis*, a continuum underlying the empirical world where all time is experienced as a single unchanging present, seems to be echoed in **Junction** (the novel).

**Dann:** Very much. I came to Jung, believe it or not, through Kate Wilhelm, who was also a great influence.

**Thrust:** Through **Margaret and I**?

**Dann:** I have to say that I haven't read **Margaret and I**. Kate's influence on my early work was through her **Orbit** period short stories. She was dealing with Jungian ideas, which interested me. For me, Jung's formulations feel intuitively valid. They've intrigued me. In the novel, the playing with Jung's ideas was done consciously, more so than in the novella. I did the same kind of thing with Borges' idealism as expressed in his "A New Refutation of Time." I was also reading Leibnitz and Borges, and all of these people actually do come together; they are similarities, they build upon each other. I discovered this as I was working and playing with ideas. What I find interesting is that, though I am working very differently now, I was taking ideas for their numinosity, a sort of Jungian aura, or perhaps, again, Platonic forms. The fact that the whole end came to me as a kind of numinous flash also links together like a story within a story.

**Thrust:** It is interesting how you seem to work both intuitively and with a conscious design, with a map yet in the dark, in a sense.

**Dann:** I find that before I can write or give structure, I have to have that almost numinal kind of idea or form. Either the form informs the structure or vice versa. In other words, I can't disentangle them in the actual doing; this only comes later when I analyze. Once I have that numinal feeling, a sense of where it is and what it's about, I hang a loose structure over it. I then write it any way it comes out, and only **then** turn a critical eye upon it.

**Thrust:** **The Man Who Melted** seems to be an attempt to explore new ground, distinct from the overlapping themes and recurrent imagery in the previous novels and the

stories in **Timetriping**.

**Dann:** A lot of the time when I'm working on something, I don't realize how much of a piece my work is. This is something that is almost frightening, in a way. But now that I've finished **The Man Who Melted**, I have an overview of it; when I was working on it, I thought I was doing something much more removed. However, I wasn't. **The Man Who Melted** is also about evolving consciousness. The evolving consciousness of **Junction** was almost a malevolent evolving God, the opposite of Chardin's. In other words, it was Chardin's kind of evolving God, but malevolent. In **The Man Who Melted** we sort of echo that; again you can see the Chardinist influence because the **Screamers** form a group that becomes conscious, a new kind of consciousness. I also echo Heidegger's idea that "the dreadful has already happened," which I mention in the book. This new consciousness is not quite understood, and it's so totally different as to defy standard morality. What I did here, and what I am trying to do now in terms of control and technique, is to try to tell a story set in the future as if it were a mainstream novel, as if it were **Daniel Martin**. It is grounded as much as I could make it in the gritty stuff of reality, though it also concerns the numinal element. I wanted to bring out perceivable reality, everyday reality, and have all the other things going on through that. That was a real juggling act, as I was dealing with dissimilar kinds of concepts.

**Thrust:** I'm surprised you mention **Daniel Martin**, as all of Fowles' work has articulated a chastening, self-admonitory ethic: curbing the overweening ego, forcefully by necessity, so as to protect humane society from the blundering ravages of the self-conscious impulse, which Fowles associates with, among other things, abstract art and all sexual adventurism. At its less doctrinaire, Fowles' art seems closer in sensibility to the SF of George Zebrowski, as compared to the more Romantic concern in your work with the isolated individual moving toward some form of self-realization.

**Dann:** Before and while I was writing **The Man Who Melted** I was reading **Daniel Martin**, and I think there was an influence. Fowles is an influence in my work, although I'm sure that no one would ever see it. I think it is somehow a style, the technique of close-focus character interaction. I'm interested in Fowles' craft, not his moral prescriptions. **The Man Who Melted** was mainly influenced, I would say, by Mann's "Death in Venice." There is also some sense of the unrelenting pull of fate...the certainty, moral certainty, of the future.

**Thrust:** What form did you feel appropriate for the material that suggested **The Man Who Melted**? I assume the gritty worldliness of what was intended to seem a contemporary novel of the future would dictate some form different from the heroic quest or mythic subtext underlying so much of your SF.

**Dann:** On one level, the novel is structured as a tragedy in the classical sense. The protagonist lives in a time and in a society, and is in a situation, where he cannot make proper moral decisions; anywhere he goes, it seems, is going to hurt someone. He's also working against a memory that he doesn't consciously have and yet is operating within him, and which is drawing him into a larger consciousness such as I used in **Junction**. It's a grim novel in terms of everyday life being grim. It's also very decadent in terms of the society that I envision. Also, much of the background stems from my own experience in Cuba and Europe at an early age.

**Thrust:** It also seems a very personal novel; the protagonist's struggle to regain psychic wholeness, like Stephen's very different struggle in "Camps," has a kind of passionate intensity, a sense of cutting close to the bone that one does not feel in the more distanced unfoldings of **Starhiker** or "A Quiet Revolution for Death." In reading these one feels a powerful emotional undertow.

**Dann:** A lot of this stuff one understands after the act of writing it. An example: when I wrote "Camps" I was writing about the protagonist going back and forth in time, and it was about my hospital experience. But it was also about how my memory worked; it was part of working out my own amnesia, and I didn't even realize this; this became clear to me afterward. When I was twenty-one, I had an appendicitis attack. I was operated on, but there were complications and I developed peritonitis, ran a temperature of 104, and was in a coma for a week. I was in the hospital for four months. It was one of the forming experiences of my life; it was after that that I would try to become a writer. I decided that I was going to take chances. Many things came about as a result of that experience: the way I perceive myself, in that in my guts I feel that every day I am alive is really a gift. It was as if I had died and was given another chance at life. They had given me a 5% chance for survival. But this whole thing about loss of memory—I did not realize that I had amnesia as a result of my fever and coma, just that there were things that were fuzzy. All that changed when I met an old friend, and memories started coming back in almost hallucinatory kinds of images. It now seems to me that in "Camps" I was paralleling my own life. In fact, I often have this fear when I'm writing that I may be delving into stuff that I'm not yet aware of consciously.

**Thrust:** So "Camps" traces the double story of Stephen working his way back to health as an individual concurrent with Stephen in the death camp trying to survive as a Jew: the endeavor to live both as an individual and as a people, like two cycles turning on one axis.

**Dann:** They were each a metaphor for the other. Stephen in the hospital and Stephen in the concentration camp were each fighting for life, and fighting for the **will to live**, if that makes any sense. I had an experience when I was at the worst, in a coma. I remember it very clearly. If you remember that part in "Camps" when Stephen receives a Demerol injection and goes walking through ice fields; well, that's all true. Almost everything that occurs in the hospital is taken from my personal experience, except the sex act with the nurse and one or two other scenes. I had come to the point while high on Demerol and free of pain to where I was walking through ice fields. It was as if I was initiating myself into death. I always had to have that ice when I was given a shot, and then of course I would spill the ice, just like Stephen, and wake up into a world of pain. As I was walking through the ice fields I saw two doors. One was completely black, and the other was blinding white, one obviously death, the other life. I had to choose one. And I remember as I walked through the door that was light, and woke up as the water spilled all over me, that it **made no difference** whether I walked into the dark room or the bright room; they bore equal weight, and it is as if I had simply flipped a coin. That will to live is part of the pain and hell of consciousness. The decision to walk through the door of light had already, somehow, been made.

**Thrust:** Most of your work until recently has concerned the possibilities of human transcendence, often dramatizing the transfigured consciousness of a hitherto unprepossessing individual, though such sea-changes seem distinctly sinister, as in "The Dybbuk Dolls" or "I'm With You in Rockland," as often as not. **The Man Who Melted**, however, clearly uses some of the theory proposed by Julian Jaynes in **The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind**, where Jaynes suggests that consciousness is a much later development in human history than is generally thought, before which time humans reasoned without self-awareness, acting when confronted with new situations on "orders" from the intuitive side of the brain, which one experienced as auditory

hallucinations...

**Dann:** Literally, as voices from the gods.

**Thrust:** Yes; which was what they were taken to be. I'm interested in the tension in the novel between the "advance" of the Screamers' telepathic group consciousness and the atavism of their reversion to bicameral thinking.

**Dann:** When I read Jaynes' book, I was very impressed with the idea aesthetically; I don't know why, but it seems to resonate somehow with my own sense of things. Oddly enough, I don't believe it's possible to prove whether Jaynes is right or wrong, so I take his work purely aesthetically, as I would Platonic forms.

**Thrust:** So it's a formal assumption underlying the novel, rather than something you personally accept.

**Dann:** Right. Somehow, I think my work tries to give coherence to the wild side, to the right brain. I seem to keep insisting on somehow making a lateral move, a quantum jump, instead of the way we usually progress: analytically.

**Thrust:** By syllogism, or building like bricklayers upon firm empirical foundations.

**Dann:** Yes. The problem is, what began Romantically, as you said, is somehow turning...malevolent. As if it's turning on me. And I'll somehow have to deal with it.

**Thrust:** The traditional critique of Romanticism, which Fowles certainly endorses, is regarding the monstrousness inherent in its emphasis on the autonomous individual, which is seen as insidious and conducive to great social evils. This is essentially the tradition that insists a work of art must express some clearly moral sensibility, and holds culpable the work of art that declines this commission (or fulfills it too subtly for the critic to notice), or suggests an ethic with which the critic disagrees. These critics hostile to the Romantic impulse as being outside moral law, such as F.R. Leavis or John Gardner, would probably regard this malevolence as vindication of their position: the Romantic birds coming home to roost.

**Dann:** This is a problem, because I am of two minds about it. It's basically a question of what I want to do with my own fiction. Like many other people, I seem to have been given a gift of perceiving from odd angles, seeing certain colors. What I've done with these stories is to try to "catch the bird," try to put it down. I've tried to do that for that super-sense of the world that you feel maybe a few times in your life, for an instant. That is not a question of morality. It can be amoral, immoral; the viewpoint, that is, one has to put down. Some of my work has been violent; I'm against violence. I would like perhaps one day to write a socially uplifting novel to which young people could look for some degree of guidance.

**Thrust:** Like **Daniel Martin**.

**Dann:** When you feel about **Daniel Martin** is interesting because I perceive it to be, yes, about man trying to find his proper place in society, but in the **moment**. Making the minute decisions that constitute life. **The Man Who Melted** stands in relation to **Junction** rather as **Daniel Martin** stands to **The Magus**. In **The Magus** he went for that numinal element, the demonic. After the masque scene, the reader felt as though he had been **pushed through**. Even if you didn't understand it, you had seen the colors. While **Daniel Martin** is not about the colors, it is about the minor morals of five-minute periods, of meetings and intersections. I perceived it as always grey.

**Thrust:** The difference you note is certainly there, yet the Fowles novels each develops a critique of modern egotism which the reader is clearly intended to take away from the text. **Junction** does not seem to possess any such didactic purpose.

**Dann:** Though one was underlying it. **Junction** does not refer to our world; it is critical, in a mocking

fashion. The way the whores comment on how politics work: in that society, they are the people who do the thinking.

**Thrust:** Kind of a chorus.

**Dann:** Yes. This was done not darkly, but I was sort of jabbing at our mores because **Junction** was, in a way, a micro-version of our world, of American society.

**Thrust:** Some reviewers seemed to accept that, but balk at the characterization of Ned Wheeler: a "slimy" protagonist, as one put it, whom you did not plainly censure, to their discomfiture.

**Dann:** That has rather irritated me, this bit about Ned being slimy. Most of us are "slimy" in that way; my belief is that if a real human being, not a superhero, were to be confronted by a monster, as Ned is by the birdbeast, he would react as Ned did: with unabashed fear. Ned is a young man who like many young people is not interested in longer term goals, but in the present; yet he is being **pulled** by outside forces that decide where his life is going and which are taking control of his life. Ned is not a superhero. He **is** a hero, maybe an anti-hero; also, like most of us, he makes decisions, but he makes them within a greater framework, which limits him in all kinds of ways, even though this is a novel about seemingly unlimited vistas. So where the external doesn't limit him, the internal does; he limits himself. Some readers wanted something else out of the book, which I was not providing. **Junction** was not written as popular fiction in the sense of fiction being written to reinforce values, to make the reader comfortable. It was written to make them uncomfortable. Much of science fiction is reassuring; it's a very cozy and comfortable genre, for all that we talk about science fiction expanding your mind and being a means to explore alternative lifestyles and world views. I'm not making a value judgement. I don't think either kind of SF is better, they are just different. **My** particular demons push me to do this kind of SF. This is what I must write, right now.

**Thrust:** **The Man Who Melted** then has roots in personal experience such as your onetime amnesia and, I assume, your feelings of having come to real consciousness late; and also in theories you find intellectually provocative such as Jaynes' and Jung's. There is one more immediate origin: your story "Whirl Cage" (1972) in which the protagonist, the Screamers, and the collapsing society all appear in prototypical form. This is a very early story; the period between it and the completion of **The Man Who Melted** constitutes virtually your entire writing career to date, just as the periods of writing "Junction" and **Junction** frame the appearance of **Starhiker**, making the gestation times for your three novels a series of Chinese boxes. Did you intend all along to base a novel on "Whirl Cage," and how has its design changed over the years?

**Dann:** "Whirl Cage" was a very important work for me because it had sold to what was an important market for me at the time, Damon Knight's **Orbit**. It was after I sold that story that I quit Law School to write full-time; it gave me that kind of push. Later, when I set out to write a novel--I needed money, I needed something to write--George Zebrowski suggested I do "Whirl Cage," because I had been toying with doing some other stories sharing that same background. So I wrote a proposal, which began as what is now the novella "Amnesia" and the first part of the eventual novel, which resulted with Mantle becoming part of this hive mind. And then the story, which was based on Damon Knight's **A for Anything** in its structure, goes 500 years into the future where the rest of the novel was to take place, in a setting almost like Aldiss' **The Long Afternoon of Earth**. I sold this proposal to Harper & Row, but when I sat down to write it, a few years later, I was a different person. I saw I didn't want to write what would have become a

philosophical adventure novel; I wanted to write a novel. So half of the prospectus was never used, and I wrote an entirely different novel. I did research into crowd behavior for the novel. Elias Canetti, who had just won the Nobel Prize, wrote a book called **Crowds and Power**, which is absolutely brilliant. I also read some other things, including a paper by a fellow named MacDougal from 1910 where he actually posited that part of mob behavior was almost telepathic in origin. I think the novel is about society coming apart, a reflective novel on our own society. Canetti is in there as an influence--stylistically, through his novel **Auto-da-Fe**.

**Thrust:** "A philosophical adventure novel": that sounds similar to **Starhiker**. You originally planned **Starhiker** to inaugurate a trilogy; are you tempted to go back and mine that unused portion of the **Whirl Cage** proposal, either as a serial successor or as an offshoot?

**Dann:** I've thought of using it. But not now. I've got other projects I want to write. And I might feel later that to rework early material would set me in a different direction. I'll have to wait. My work is cyclic, so there is a chance...

**Thrust:** Your first published stories were in collaboration with George Zebrowski, and you have since written collaborations, all short, with several other writers. Do you feel that these undertakings generate some hybrid vigor, or are they essentially left-handed exercises?

**Dann:** Many of the stories George and I did together, like "Od," were obviously not really serious, and, I think, not very good. But a story like "Yellowhead" shows us bringing our strengths together. More recently I have been doing most of my collaborations with Gardner Dozois, both anthologies and fiction, and I do believe we bring our strengths together. I did a story with Michael Swanwick and Gardner called "Touring," which for what it did I thought it was successful. Closer to my heart is a story that Gardner and I did called "Down Among the Dead Men," which is about a prisoner in a death camp who is a vampire. It sounds silly; it is a story Gardner prodded me to get going on, and I didn't take it seriously, but then got caught in it. Everyone who has seen it says that it is very powerful, but too grim; it has fallen through the slick market, and we're afraid that it may fall further. But it's a piece of work I would be proud of at any time.

**Thrust:** That sounds similar to the charge leveled against "A Quiet Revolution for Death."

**Dann:** Interestingly, that story was really written as a **homage** to Thomas Disch, whose work I love. I wrote it for an anthology he was editing, but Tom didn't like it at all. Bob Silverberg loved it, though; saw it as a watershed work.

**Thrust:** **The Man Who Melted** seems to contain another **homage** to, or echo of, Disch's work: the furry boy.

**Dann:** Yes, it's there. I bought a novella from Tom for my anthology **Immortal** which gave me the idea.

**Thrust:** Literary influence is itself a kind of collaboration, although one of the partners may be unwitting, or even long dead.

**Dann:** Of sorts. When I first started writing I read and reread authors like Fowles and Kosinski to see how their writing worked. I was very influenced by Kosinski. The title "The Marks of Painted Teeth" was a **homage** to **The Painted Bird**. I wanted to capture that numinal sense by which the boy in that book could, say, look up in a tree and see a spirit, and then look down and see the body of a dead woman; both were of the same order of reality because of his childish mind. I thought the influence was obvious, but when I asked if others saw it, their response was "What?" This is why when teaching I tell students not to worry about influence, because no one's going to see it; you're going to put it through your own sensorium and it's going to be **you**. You don't fabricate

your own style; style is a way of seeing. To my mind, writing fiction is an intense and private means of experiencing oneself. When we are able to do this, it's as if we've broken through iron doors, escaped for an instant that prison we fashion for ourselves. This prison is the way we see the world. I write to try to see myself out of my perceptive prison. This kind of delving is always, in some way, dangerous. Joe Haldeman once told me that if I kept going on this stuff I would go crazy. And I responded that no, on the contrary, if I **didn't**, I would go crazy.

**Thrust:** Despite these deeply personal creative impulses, you have frequently collaborated and plan future collaborative projects, including some novels. How do you embark **jointly** on such a venture of self-experience?

**Dann:** Each collaboration is different in terms of the distance between its authors and their material. The act of writing with Jay Haldeman, since we actually wrote "High Steel" together and Jay produced a clean draft, was intensely personal. However, I think it is a question of subject matter. There's a kind of subject matter that I get into only in my own work. I may explore personal themes in my collaborative work, but would only see it after the fact. The struggle is in my own work. There I wrestle with dangerous snakes...whatever that means...(laughter).

**Thrust:** Does this struggle go on then in collaborations, or are they more impersonal?

**Dann:** It's not more impersonal, but you have someone you are working with, as though you are walking down a dark tunnel with someone else; it's less frightening. The act is still very personal and many things can come out through it, as they would in your solo writing. But this merging of expression and intent does seem to push the work away from private concerns. In a collaboration you plot it out completely, whereas if you're writing it yourself, it need only have an intuitive rightness, which may itself just be a self-imposed barrier, I don't know. The very idea of collaboration assumes an effort in which each partner has something the story needs; otherwise there's no need to collaborate on it.

**Thrust:** Which new project do you intend to undertake first?

**Dann:** I've been leaning heavily towards **Counting Coup**. It's about two old men who go on a last tear to prove, well, they don't know exactly what to prove, perhaps that they are still alive. One is an old medicine man who lost his visionary sight, the other a handyman on social security, with a family, who had money once but spent it all. There's no real way out of their situations, and they take off on a month-long tear, which ends with the two in a visionary pit, with the medicine man trying to regain his power. Now that I've finished **The Man Who Melted** and had a chance to look it over, it seems similar to my previous work in that it is agonized in its subject matter. It is a journey through darkness; and much of my work, I find, is frightening to me as I look back on it. However, I think that slowly I'm passing through the flame, because the work that I want to do now is of a different nature. I'm thinking now of **Counting Coup**, which is affirmative, even though the protagonists' lives do not change at the end. Within restrictions, the same human restrictions I've been dealing with in my previous work, they reach an accord with difficult circumstances and, if they can't change their lives, they change their perspective. That gives a degree of freedom my other protagonists haven't had. They were pulled by outside forces, by almost mythic tragic imperatives which swept them along, fight as they might. What is intriguing me now is a book where the characters make a statement, such as the last screaming drunk of my two old men in **Counting Coup**. By Indian tradition, after an arrow has pierced the flesh and the enemy is dead, others can make symbolic strikes, and

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# My Column



## Ted White

### FALLACIES & FANTASIES

I can't remember the **first** fairy-tale I heard. My mother taught pre-school-age children and read many stories to them. Some were edited versions of Milne's Pooh stories, while others were out of your basic Grimm. Stories about salt-makers tumbling into the ocean, animated objects, wishes foolishly chosen, and all the rest. Part of the folklore. But I do remember the first such story which I read myself. It was **Jack the Giant Killer**, a complete--if rather short--book, with a vocabulary list at the end and large type. My mother gave it to me and told me I was to read no less than two pages a day. Even in the abbreviated prose of **Jack the Giant Killer**, two pages of large type did not take the story very far along, but it took less than two pages to hook me. I read the entire book in two days and immediately asked for more. Thus my first book, a fantasy, hooked me on the pleasures of reading.

I made the shift from fantasies to science fiction about three years later. At the time, it seemed a logical and inevitable move: I'd read all the fantasy collections (principally Lang's multi-colored volumes) I could find in the local libraries, and science fiction seemed to satisfy both my need for fantasy and my curiosity about the universe. I recall feeling, when I first stumbled upon something that I knew to be and recognized as science fiction, as though I had found my own kind of thinking at last: this was my kind of fiction. I was nine years old.

I was in my early twenties when I got a chance to read Tolkien's **Lord of the Rings** trilogy, then still available only in an imported British hardcover edition.

Tom Condit passed me his copies, telling me that he'd spent the past two days reading them straight through, "and I finished 'em in your subway station, Ted." He snorted with delight. "You'll love 'em!"

He was right. I did. It was like being a kid again, reading **Jack the Giant Killer**, only now I was an adult and the whole thing was bigger, with a whole lot more pages and smaller type. I immersed myself in the three books, revelling in the experience--no doubt similar to that which had befallen Tom--of childlike emotions in a (some-what) more subtle, adult context. There is much to be said for staying in touch with our child-selves.

What lies behind this experience? Children, I think, have a natural affinity for fantasy. Fantasy is part of their daily play experience. As each child recapitulates our race's social evolution in its personal evolution, that child experiences a need for fantasy, for myth, for root-religion: the metaphors for how and why we came to be here. Children are like gods in their tiny solipsistic universes, and fantasy in both dreams and play is the inevitable acting-out of this fact. At the pre-school stage, children are naturally creative in what they do; their capacity for fantasy seems to parallel their yet-unstifled creativity.

Part of this conditioning and socialization that occurs to children as they grow up has the effect on many children of stifling their creativity and their imaginations--their connections to fantasy. They learn to become passive consumers of products created by others. "How I envy you **creative** people," a female executive of the World Bank gushed at me once, upon learning that I'd written books. Intelligent, ambitious, and successful, she did not consider herself "creative." She knew herself to be separate and different from those people who created the music she listened to, the movies and TV she watched, and the books and magazines she read. We "creative people" were all sort of "stars" to her; we were magical in some way that she was not. She could not be argued out of that conviction; it was something she **knew**.

So I have mixed emotions about the World of Tomorrow which we are experiencing Today. Forget science fiction. It is of cult-interest only. And skip over sci-fi, which partakes of the gloss of mass popularity only because it is really, yes, **fantasy**. Fantasy is **the** cultural phenomenon of our day.

It pervades our culture, from comic books--now almost wholly devoted to heroic fantasies of one sort or another--to heavy metal rock, clothed in the costumes and myths of fantasy, to the games we all play. Fantasy role-playing games have swept the nation, making **Dungeons and Dragons** a huge money-maker.

As with anything that makes it way into the mass-market of cultural consciousness, fantasy has been cheapened a whole lot, and I kind of resent that.

I suppose that's because, in **my** solipsistic universe I made a proprietary discovery when I discovered fantasy. **Jack the Giant Killer** was **my** book. I was the biggest Oz fan that I knew, and never mind the people with the complete collection from whom I borrowed the copies I read. What I am saying is that I, like most of you, established a one-to-one relationship with my fantasy fiction. I didn't read those stories in a large auditorium, from a big screen, as one of many. I read them in my room, propped up in bed, or in the swing on the porch, or maybe under a tree somewhere. I was always alone. Even if I was surrounded by other people, I was alone when I read: I went into the place I was reading about.

I have always felt a little odd about seeing the fictional characters with whom I had this personal relationship portrayed by actors in movies or on TV. They never look right. I can think of only one exception: Bogart as Sam Spade--but **The Maltese Falcon** was an exceptional movie, being perhaps the only movie ever shot

directly from the book on which it is based. But Judy Garland didn't look much like **my** Dorothy.

Back in 1959, fans like Ted Johnstone speculated about a movie based on **Lord of the Rings**, casting their favorite actors in each role. Now Tolkien has been on TV and in movie theatres.

In the mid-sixties Roy Thomas, then a fledgling editor at Marvel Comics, told me how much he wanted to adapt Conan to comics, and that he'd speculated about a Conan movie. Roy succeeded in putting Conan into comics, and there have been two Conan movies made so far, with more undoubtedly on the way. In the meantime, the Conan books have proliferated wildly under many hands.

How about dragons? You like dragons? Check out your neighborhood supermarket, the one with a half-dozen to a dozen best-sellers on its meagre paperback racks. There's at least one Anne McCaffrey dragon book there at all times. Stephen Donaldson can be found there on occasion.

Fantasy has never sold magazines--UNKNOWN never did as well as ASTOUNDING, despite a heavy overlap of authors; GALAXY couldn't support either BEYOND in the fifties or WORLDS OF FANTASY in the sixties; and FANTASTIC always lagged behind AMAZING, even when it was the better magazine. And WEIRD TALES, never as strong as the SF magazines, was an early victim of the death of the pulps, in the early fifties. There have been several attempts to revive it, with another currently underway, but I doubt it will be any more successful this time than it has been in the recent past.

The fantasy boom seems to have by-passed magazines and zeroed in on books. Fat books. Trilogies. Trilogies of trilogies. Most of them have a unicorn, a maiden, a sword, or some combination of these three, on their covers. Winged animals are another favorite. (A winged unicorn would probably sell a **lot** of books.)

I find that I can't read these books. I have a lot of them. In 1980 I was, as some of you will remember from a previous "My Column," a judge of the World Fantasy Awards. I was sent a **lot** of fantasy books. Some of them were from specialty publishers, some from major paperback publishers. Altogether, they added up to four or five large boxes full. Since then, various publishers who know me for the good fellow and stern critic that I am have sent me **more** books. Most of these purport to be part of an SF program, but the majority are fantasy nevertheless.

The problem, of course, is that the vast majority of these fantasy books are garbage. They are poorly conceived and badly written. They are being rushed out by publishers as fast as they can be yanked from their authors' typewriters (or, more likely, word processors--which, if you're lucky, won't lose whole chapters in the latest thunderstorm)--and they're being snapped up by the thousands, by readers who couldn't care less as long as they get their regular fix of fantasy.

I suppose I should be glad that so many people are into fantasy these days instead of bitching and moaning about the lousy quality of what they're reading. And of course it isn't **all** bad--the glut may obscure the gems, but by the same token it makes them possible. But Sturgeon's Law still applies: (at least) 90% of it is crap.

Inevitably there has been a backlash, albeit a pretty ineffectual one. I think a lot of us have cherished our private backlashes--our rebellion against the wholesale taking-over of our private relationships with our favorite fantasy characters by Hollywood or the best-seller racks--and there has been a modest public outcry, by people like Gregory Benford (in THE PATCHIN REVIEW), that fantasy in its popularity is polluting the precious bodily fluids of science fiction.

It's certainly true that the boundary between fantasy and SF has been blurred considerably in recent times. **Star Wars** had a major effect: sci-fi (pronounced "skiffy") is usually usually fantasy (in that it is all "magic")

with some SF hardware thrown in as furniture.

Science fiction has always entertained its fantasies, like time travel, faster-than-light travel, etc. These have hardened into pseudo-science, a set of conventions which we accept as "scientifically believable" even though we all know better. But out in the general population where they've never heard of Hugo Gernsback and even Isaac Asimov is only an occasional contributor to TV GUIDE, faster-than-light travel is believed in: that's how the UFO-people come and go. The barrier implicit in the speed of light means nothing to these people. Lots of them can remember when the **speed of sound** was a barrier no man had ever broken, and now, hell, we've got the Concorde, don't we? So who's to say those UFO fellows aren't ahead of us there? If you know **anything** about UFOs (and that's about what most folks know), you know that they can change direction suddenly and at great speeds--stuff we humans just can't do.

UFOs are one of the big myth-fantasies of our century. (Hey, wanta buy an **alien airfield** in the Andes? Guaranteed a **million** years old! Cheap!) "Flying Saucers" touched a basic nerve: they were necessary. **Close Encounters** capitalized on this need, this belief, by legitimizing UFOs first and then re-mythifying them in realistic terms. The movie can be seen as valuable in its instruction to the general populace that a First Contact with aliens must be conducted with, if possible, optimism and idealism. But of course after **Close Encounters** came the television-movie (to be followed by a regular TV series this season) **V**, which exploits our xenophobia, justifying a paranoid viewpoint in which apparently "socially-acceptable" aliens turn out to be very bad.

Yes, as That Crazy Buck Rogers Stuff (SF) became acceptable and assimilated into the general culture--via comics, TV and movies--it turned into something else entirely: That Crazy Unicorns & Dragons Stuff. Fantasy.

Were we **always** wrong? Was SF truly from the beginning nothing more than a 20th Century rationalization for fantasy? Did magic always underlie the "science" in science fiction?

Well, it's a moot point, because today the "science" in sci-fi is magic. You wonder about those dogfights in space in **Star Wars**? Magic. You wonder how E.T. came back to life? Magic. (And a metaphor for Love, too: the most potent kind of magic.) How **do** they beam up and beam down in **Star Trek**? Magic. Time travel--whether in **The Philadelphia Experiment** or **Superman**--it boils down to magic. Even the paradoxes are ignored. After all, McCaffrey's Pern stories present themselves as SF, fire-breathing dragons and all.

What am I getting to here? Damned if I know. On the one hand, perhaps a good case of indignation at the way fantasy has perverted SF; on the other hand, why not celebrate the return of fantasy to our general culture? After all, until a short generation ago, adults scoffed at fantasy as childish and beneath them. Isn't this better?

Well, yes, if you don't mind the spread of fresh superstitions among the populace, if you think that it makes sense for supposedly mature adults to really believe a great deal of nonsense, like astrology, numerology, ancient space travellers, UFO-people, and the like.

At a recent (non-fan) party I met an apparently intelligent fellow--he worked with computers for a living--who told me in all seriousness that the threat of Nuclear Winter was just a scare campaign. "Look," he told me, "all this stuff about the Bomb is crap, put out to con people. Shit, it's no big deal. Anyone can survive one of those things if he's prepared. Look at Japan--**they** survived." I tried to point out to him that Japan suffered only two bombs, both quite tiny in comparison with today's H-bombs, and that those two small bombs created catastrophes and ended a war. He didn't believe me. A college education--in the sciences!--a mid-level

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# interview with

Photograph by Doug Fratz



## LARRY NIVEN

Interviews with science fiction authors are often dated by the time they are published and read. I have never felt that this situation should be detrimental to the value of the interview, if the interviewer has done his job. A good interview with an sf author is more historic preservation than news.

It must be admitted, however, that this interview with Larry Niven has been delayed in publication somewhat longer than usual. It was conducted at the World Fantasy Convention in Providence in 1979, and sold to ETERNITY SCIENCE FICTION shortly thereafter. But that magazine then died a lingering death, taking years to relinquish its backlog. It was done while *Inferno* was a recent memory and *Dream Park* was a work in progress. The interview has since been expanded slightly to bring it more up to date.

As for Larry Niven, he is an sf author who, I'm confident, needs no introduction to the readers of THRUST.

**Thrust:** You mentioned in another interview, or perhaps it was Jerry Pournelle, that for years you had wanted to write a science fiction version of Dante. Why?

**Niven:** It's a neat fantasy. I was handed *Inferno* as part of a course in world literature at college, and I raced through it in a day and two nights. It reads great. I had the Ciardi version, by the way. I'm told that other translations of Dante are duller. The Ciardi has all the footnotes you could ever want. I read *Inferno*, started over, read it again, and as usual I started daydreaming in class. Daydreaming in class is why I never got further than a Bachelor's in mathematics. It's a lot of the reason I got thrown out of Cal. Tech., I suppose. I daydreamed about what I would do in the *Inferno* if I couldn't call on angels. There was nothing but deus ex machina every step of the way in *Inferno*.

Suppose I didn't have a guide at all? How would I get out? That was exciting daydreaming. I later read the Ciardi *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, but that came out some time after I'd read *Inferno*. Then one day as Jerry and I were talking over our second novel, it suddenly occurred to me that I had a man I knew I could collaborate with who also had the theological background I needed. So I talked him into it. And it grabbed him the way it grabbed me, very rapidly. Once we got into the real writing, we spat it out in about four months, and it was in some ways the strangest four months of my life. I had more fun in terms of imaginary experiences, and went through more pain, again in terms of imaginary experiences, and Jerry couldn't stop writing any more than I could. We had to get out of that place. The *Inferno* is unpleasant territory.

**Thrust:** I was taking a course in Dante at the same time I was reading your novel, and I wanted to do an easy term paper...

**Niven:** It's not so easy as all that if you want to get it right. For instance, besides the Ciardi translation of *The Divine Comedy*, you also have to read C.S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce*.

**Thrust:** I found that it was much easier to follow the geography in your version than in the original.

**Niven:** Yeah. Jerry and I both tend to lay things out so that the reader knows what's going on. It's only fair. Dante did his best, but he didn't have the kind of background we've got. Our background, for instance, includes Dante.

**Thrust:** The original had dated badly in places, where you read a canto and then have to study the footnotes to understand what you've read, because all the references were to political events in medieval Italy. In your version when you brought, say, Kurt Vonnegut on, nobody has to go to the footnotes.

**Niven:** But if the book lasts 700 years, somebody is going to have to read the footnotes.

**Thrust:** Did you ever hear from Vonnegut on that?

**Niven:** Not a word. I don't know if he's read it.

**Thrust:** What sort of response did you get on that book in general? I recall that Dick Geis in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW was rather irate because of the lack of rational explanations.

**Niven:** I remember Dick Geis's response. I gather he wanted a science fiction novel. Sorry, it isn't. The hero is a hack science fiction writer put into a fantasy situation. Most of the way he's trying to find out rational explanations, but there aren't any.

**Thrust:** And of course he would try to build a glider, which I can't imagine Dante or Virgil doing.

**Niven:** No, Dante just went where he was pointed.

**Thrust:** You have written quite a lot of fantasy in addition to your science fiction. *The Magic Goes Away* for example. Do you find your approach there is different from that you use when writing science fiction?

**Niven:** Certainly. But when I first started writing, it was not instantly obvious that they are two different attitudes. It took me a while to realize that, and when I did, I knew I didn't have the head for fantasy. I wanted to develop it. It took me several years. My first fantasy, or nearly the first, was a straight deal-with-the-Devil story. It was done strictly for cleverness. I'm talking about *Convergent Series*. Then there were a few more, but it didn't get to be fun, which is an index of whether I'm doing something right or not, until the Warlock series. I had been writing seven or eight years by then.

**Thrust:** Hal Clement mentions that his problem is that if he changed one physical law, he's got a ripple effect and have to change the next one, and the next, to compensate and make the whole thing convincing.

**Niven:** He's perfectly right. Changing one law of physics is like trying to eat one peanut.

**Thrust:** Yet in something like "Not Long Before The End" you did change a large quantity of them.

**Niven:** Of course I left the physical laws as kind of a rock bottom. If there is no magic around, then the physical laws are what works, and you have to figure out what laws were in action when there was magic. For instance, the unicorns lose their horns. The dragons turn to old stone and get taken for dinosaurs several thousand years later. You have to figure it out for each magical species.

**Thrust:** There is still a very rational kind of fantasy, the UNKNOWN WORLDS variety. Do you think you can ever write the irrational kind, along the lines of Lord Dunsany, Clark Ashton Smith, etc.?

**Niven:** My problem is I read a short story by Tom Disch. It was called "Dangerous Flags." It totally spoiled me for any sort of "my-magic-is-stronger-than-your-magic" type of writing. I remember realizing when I was writing "Not Long Before The End" that I could have any type of magic working for my main character, the Warlock, as long as it fails. I don't have to explain it if it doesn't work right. But when he actually kills Hap, I have to make that rational. Sure, I love swords & sorcery if it's done well. I'm a Howard fan. But I just could never make myself believe that Conan would keep running across isolated incidents of magic in the midst of a rational world. If magic works, it's the basis for civilization.

**Thrust:** I'm thinking of a more irrational world, such as that in *The King of Elfland's Daughter*.

**Niven:** Oh, I love that book! But whether I can write like that, I don't know. I haven't tried.

**Thrust:** You're getting closer with *Inferno*, in that it did not ultimately become rational.

**Niven:** I did write a Dunsany story. I spent all night rereading Dunsany short stories, and then I sat down and wrote "Transfer of Power." I really think that's as close as I've come to writing fantasy of this sort.

**Thrust:** Were you interested in writing science fiction when you started, or did you start writing science fiction because there was more of a market for it?

**Niven:** I started writing science fiction because I kept thinking up science fiction stories. The reason for that, I suppose, was that I was a science fiction fan.

**Thrust:** When you began writing, you were involved with a certain mail-order writing school. Did you find it worthwhile?

**Niven:** I've never met anyone else who would claim to have started his career with the Famous Writers School. I did quit the course two-thirds of the way through, but by then I was selling. What I learned was mechanics, and I needed to know the mechanics. I'm told that there are better ways to get them. Ray Bradbury thought I should drop the thing and take a course at UCLA in writing and get some face-to-face experience with honest-to-god writers. I've heard from others that no competent writer ever taught one of these classes until Clarion, which started way after my career was launched. I cannot say I made a mistake. Except I gave up the course just as we were getting into characterization. Make of that what you will.

**Thrust:** How much did you learn from Fred Pohl when he was editor of IF and GALAXY?

**Niven:** Quite a lot. The guy was more than just an editor. He wanted to see that I got a career going. He suggested early on that I should write about the strange pockets of the universe where odd things are happening, even by astrophysical standards. I had written "Neutron Star" and tried to go with his suggestion for a while. I wrote "At The Core" about the galactic core. I wrote "Relic of the Empire" under double stars. I wrote "The Soft Weapon" which takes place under Beta Lyrae, which is a weird one. Weird enough that I used it as a tourist trap. I kept that going for all the time I was

writing the stories in the collection *Neutron Star*. I suppose I'm still doing it.

**Thrust:** Did you find that people didn't consider you an established writer until you were selling to more than one market?

**Niven:** I suppose that's true. I sent a bunch of stories to FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION before I sold my first one to IF. And from then on IF/GALAXY was getting first look at everything. I was told later that Ed Ferman couldn't believe my work was admirable. By the time I heard that, I had sold my fifth story to F&SF, but I guess I had gotten better.

**Thrust:** John Campbell was paying the most in those days. Didn't you submit anything to him?

**Niven:** During the year in which I did nothing but write and sold nothing, I sent stories to all the magazines, but found that it took three months for John Campbell to send out a rejection slip. I could get rejection slips faster from other magazines, so I was kind of turned off on ANALOG.

**Thrust:** Before long you were doing mostly novels. Did you find you were a natural novelist all along, or was that something that developed over time?

**Niven:** Almost everyone goes from shorter lengths to longer lengths. There are many reasons. One is that as skills develop there is more to say on any set of assumptions. And one can use more elaborate sets of assumptions for an alien culture or the future or whatever. And most importantly, novels sell for more money. Further, with short stories, you can make your mistakes faster, and learn faster. Writing a bad novel can waste a good deal of time. Write a bad short story and you can go right on to write another bad short story. But I'm still writing short stories. It keeps me tight. I would never give up short stories because if I did I'm likely to become verbose in novels. Jerry Pournelle doesn't like the short story form, but that's okay. I will keep us both tight.

**Thrust:** The two of you recently did a shorter piece for *Destinies*.

**Niven:** Yes, it was 15,000 words. We had been talking to Dianna King, then editor of NOVA, which was then the title of OMNI. She told us that if we wrote a short story we'd be given top fee, which was \$1250, with a 25% kill fee if they reject it. We wrote it, Diana King quit, Ben Bova took over, the title changed to OMNI, and we sent the story in, longer than promised. By then Ben's publisher had told him he wanted shorter works for OMNI. So we collected our 25% and later sold the story to *Destinies*. We deliberately set out to do a short story and it worked fine. I believe Jerry and I can do anything we want in one night, with enough Irish coffee to support us.

**Thrust:** What are your collaboration methods like?

**Niven:** With Jerry, we get together, mostly with coffee and brandy, and we talk and talk, recording whatever is worth recording. We don't start writing until the whole novel is planned out. But we often don't follow the plan strictly. *The Mote in God's Eye* got stalled for a good bit after the midshipmen got killed. We resumed finally right at that point, rather than taking it up in the New Caledonia system, which was what we had been planning. In *Lucifer's Hammer*, we did not start with an atomic power plant. The stronghold was going to be a peasant community which was going to survive, by the time we finished. We finally just couldn't get interested in it enough ourselves. We tried a couple of weird directions, but we were not writing the book we wanted to. But we have to have a book planned out in detail so we'll have a direction. Once we have the book planned out, we assign each other sections, themes, characters. Eventually, one of us picks a character as his spokesman rather than our spokesman. For instance, in *Lucifer's Hammer*, Harry the mailman was mostly mine.

Randall was both of ours, and we both used Mark Czesu because we both knew the original pretty well. In general, if the character is doing as best he can under adverse circumstances, the first draft was Jerry's. If someone gets hysterical, that's me writing. But we re-write each other's work until it's right, three or four times if necessary. So I did Harry the mailman, and Jerry created Alim Nassor; in fact, all of the cannibals were created by Jerry. He got much of the early segments straight out of a psychology textbook on his shelf. If Jerry were here, we could go on at vast length about collaborating. But the rules change with someone else. Steven Barnes and I collaborate quite differently. Being a newcomer, he's got writing talent but is lacking some of the skills it takes ten years to develop. So he's writing all the first drafts to **The Dream Park Murders\***, and I take over and do the intermediate and final drafts.

**Thrust:** Many writers say that if they talk about a story at length before writing it, they will be unable to keep up interest in writing it. Why doesn't this happen to you?

**Niven:** I can't imagine why it would happen to them. Aren't they in this game because it's so much fun to write a story? I tell the story over and over again, and when it's good enough, I write it down. But some stories can't be told that way. Here's Niven's Rule for new writers: the story you can tell at a cocktail party without anyone asking too many questions, because you answered them already, is a story worth writing. I told the Svetz stories to people before I wrote them. But some stories are too involved or subjective, and can't be told at cocktail parties. But I don't see why people are unable to write stories once they're told. I can see why Harlan Ellison couldn't do it, because I know that Harlan writes his stories final draft, straight out, and if the first draft isn't good enough, he throws it in the wastebasket. But that isn't my style of writing.

**Thrust:** Into what new areas would you like to expand your work?

**Niven:** I would like to write like every good writer in the field if I wanted to, because if I could write like Ray Bradbury and Harlan Ellison and Fritz Leiber, I could write better than any of them. I would have all of their skills plus mine. I think finishing this novel with Steven Barnes is going to improve my skills considerably, not to mention his. It's an ambitious project, with realities on several levels. We're setting it in a futuristic Disneyland, as it would be after 75 more years of technology. That's maybe half of the book. The other half is derived from Dungeons and Dragons and Zorko. So level number one is this giant entertainment park; level number two is the South Sea Treasure Game, in which for four and a half days they are wondering through an imaginary landscape created largely with holograms, a landscape which started out as part of a war game in which the military invaded Brazil. Having finished invading Brazil, the U.S. Army turned this thing back to Dream Park to sell, and the South Sea Treasure Game resulted. Fifteen characters move through a largely imaginary landscape, using rules of magic that they learn along the way. That's level number two. Level number three is that somebody left the South Seas Treasure Game to do a little industrial espionage, and he apparently murdered a guard on the way. It was probably an accident. Now he's back in the game. So we're inserting the security chief for Dream Park into the game as a character. It's a three level book that's going to be hard to write. It's already hard to write.

**Thrust:** How did you come to be collaborating with Steven Barnes?

**Niven:** He seemed intelligent. He seemed a natural storyteller. He seemed on his way to becoming one of the

best new wave writers of the late seventies, and I couldn't let that happen! He was too good to be a new wave writer. So I got us together the easiest way. I took a story I had written that had never sold, that had been laying around for years, and I gave it to Steven and said, "Can you do anything with this?" The worst that could have happened would have been for him to say, "No," and hand it back. The best that could have happened is I would have a good story where it looked like I'd failed. And that's what happened with "The Locusts." It appeared in ANALOG, and will probably appear else-where. It's a story I had given up on, though it's a superb story idea, and now it's competing for a Hugo Award.

**Thrust:** You called Steve Barnes a "new wave writer". What do you mean by that?

**Niven:** Good point. I should not have used that term; it no longer describes anything. What I meant was that he was concentrating totally on style, stylistic tricks and characterization, to the exclusion of all other values that make up a good science fiction story. I wanted to teach him to do research, and he learned quickly. Once you tell Steve Barnes that certain work has to be done, he goes out and **does** it. He's got enormous amounts of energy. In most of the stories he showed me, there was not enough story other than inside the character's head.

**Thrust:** Had he been selling before you began collaborating?

**Niven:** He had sold a little, yes.

**Thrust:** Do you usually find in a collaboration that you're writing a story that you couldn't write alone?

**Niven:** There is no excuse for writing a collaboration unless it is a story that you can't tell by yourself. And that has to be true for **both** of the collaborators. Otherwise just one of you should be writing it. Collaborating is too much hard work to be doing just for kicks, unless you're going to do the book badly, as in **The Ring** by Piers Anthony and Robert Margroff. Even there, I wouldn't get together with someone to do a bad collaboration, because it is less work to write a bad story yourself. Collaboration is always more work than a solo. Writing with Jerry Pournelle is more than half the work of doing it myself, and it's more than half the work for Jerry too. So it had better be a better book than each of us could have done, because we're only going to get half the money each.

**Thrust:** Does criticism of your work effect what you write in any way?

**Niven:** Believe it or not, I don't know. I think the answer is no. Criticism by professional critics affects my writing very little, but it does have some effect. For one thing, I try to decide for myself which critics are worthwhile, based on whether or not they understand my work. The critic who understands and the critic who likes my work is the guy most likely to tell me what books by other writers are worth reading. For instance, there was Richard Delap, who produced a very bad, very successful magazine\* in which most of the critics seemed to be chosen for their incompetence. I have to learn to recognize such things so I can ignore the critics who aren't going to pick the books I like.

**Thrust:** Did you find yourself less able to enjoy other people's fiction as you progressed as a writer, either from gnawing envy or because you knew how to do what they were doing better than they did?

**Niven:** I must say that I haven't felt gnawing envy for at least ten years. But I do have trouble reading everything that's good. Books are sent to me free, and I generally pick and choose based on the critical reviews when they appear. There's too many good things to read, even in the meagre science fiction and fantasy field. I have my own career to pursue; I can't spend all my time reading and daydreaming anymore. I'm in the middle of two collaborations, which means there are two collabora-

\* Actually published by Ace in 1981 as **Dream Park**.

\* DELAP'S F&SF REVIEW was published monthly from 1975-1978.

tors depending on me to do my share.

**Thrust:** Do you find that you must have a large reading input to maintain your writing output?

**Niven:** I haven't the remotest idea, since I've never stopped reading. If I stopped reading for a few years and my output went down, then I'd be able to answer your question. But I'm not going to do that.

**Thrust:** You're obviously fond of James Branch Cabell, and it has apparently influenced the kind of fantasy you write. Do you think it's influenced your science fiction?

**Niven:** Hmm. Good question. Not that I can see, but I'm sure you're right about my fantasy.

**Thrust:** How do you feel about his premise that life is maintained by essential lies, which he called Dynamic Illusions? Cabell had an elaborate theory about it.

**Niven:** That has not entered my science fiction at all. I don't believe it. It may have entered my fantasy, but then I don't believe my fantasy either.

**Thrust:** What do you mean by not believing it?

**Niven:** I mean that before I write the story I don't believe it and after I write the story I don't believe it. Of course during the writing I believe it. If I don't believe it, it goes in the wastebasket. When I'm in a fantasy story I know what it looks like, feels like, smells like, sounds like. I presume that any storyteller can make that claim. I live the story; even if it is a fantasy story, I'm still living it while I'm writing it.

## Dann (Continued From Page 9)

that's called counting coup. The two old men are making a symbolic strike, and they change nothing, and they change everything.

\* \* \*

### JACK DANN INTERVIEW UPDATE: 1984

**Thrust:** *The Man Who Melted* is coming out this fall, after the appearance of several installments in and out of the SF field during the last few years. Three of these excerpts were nominated for the Nebula Award, a record for a forthcoming novel. Despite this, the book was a long time finding a publisher.

**Dann:** We decided to market the novel outside the SF field, to publish it simply as a novel. Its reception outside the genre was, in a frustrating way, positive because it was read with such enthusiasm, but editors felt it was not a standard SF novel yet had too much of the SF trappings to be considered a trade book, and they didn't know where it would fit on their lists. My agent read me one long letter from an editor who said this was a book that he felt he should get behind, but did not know how to market. A number of distinguished trade publishers responded this way. But the novel had no trouble in the genre market. Jim Frenkel, my editor for *Junction* at Dell, asked to see it once Bluejay Books was established, and bought it.

**Thrust:** The novel's ending is different from that in the manuscript I read three years ago.

**Dann:** Yes; I revised it, interestingly enough, back to its original conception, an ending which is strangely similar to *Counting Coup's* in that the protagonists prevail even though the world is perhaps tragic. I went on from that idea to do a kind of circular ending which suggested something of the inevitability of classical tragedy. Several people, including two editors, expressed reservations, so I went back and rewrote it.

**Thrust:** At the 1982 World Fantasy Convention, you gave a reading of "Bad Medicine," a contemporary fantasy concerning American Indians. What connection does this have with your mainstream novel, *Counting Coup*?

**Thrust:** Then you stop believing?

**Niven:** Sure. I don't really believe that fog is a sign that time tracks are merging.

**Thrust:** I guess in that sense virtually no fantasy writer believes what he writes.

**Niven:** In that sense you're perfectly right.

### LARRY NIVEN INTERVIEW UPDATE

**Thrust:** Since this interview you have had quite a bit of work published, including *The Integral Trees* this year. What other work is forthcoming?

**Niven:** After some years of delays due to trouble at Ace, *More Magic*, an anthology of stories set in the Warlock's universe, will be out sometime in 1984, with me as editor and author of two stories. I've seen the cover by Boris; it illustrates "Talisman" by me and Dian Girard. Works in progress include *Footfall*, with Jerry Pournelle, which is due out in January of 1985 from Ballantine. *Fallen Angels*, with Jerry Pournelle and David Gerrold, is still at the outline stage. *The Legacy of Hoerot*, with Jerry Pournelle and Steven Barnes, is well under way. It involves a unique life form menacing a colony on a distant world. There will be a computerized game based on *Inferno*, and a young adult's book, with Jerry Pournelle and Wendy All, based on a civilization of intelligent moles. Every so often I have to do something weird, just to prove I'm versatile.

**Thrust:** Thank you, Larry Niven.

**Dann:** "Bad Medicine" was taken from a chapter in *Counting Coup*, which is essentially a contemporary novel. Its fantasy element is really incidental. In the short story, I brought the fantasy element forward. Much of the material in "Bad Medicine" came from my own experience with Indian people--in religious terms, the Sioux. When I gave that reading, if you remember, I mentioned that some of the more fantastical elements I myself had experienced... which ones I won't say. *Counting Coup* is now having its final draft, and "Bad Medicine" will appear in ISAAC ASIMOV'S this fall. Readers may be interested in comparing them, but I believe they will have essentially different audiences, as the novel will not appear in the genre.

**Thrust:** You have mentioned a second volume of poems, *Songs of a White Heart*, as being in the works. What is happening with that?

**Dann:** The poems were written during the course of the year in which I ceremonied with the Indian people. They were written as a diary, although as poems they stand alone. My sense of myself when I was involved with these people was that I was not a white man trying to be an Indian--what Indians distainfully call "Wannabees"--I was basically there as a white. I got involved in these ceremonies because a friend was undergoing a vision quest, and he kept slipping notes under the door asking me to be there. I was a bit nervous about being at such a ceremony as I felt myself an outsider, and I believe that because I remained an outsider, I was taken in. The poems were written in 1981, and a few appeared in *Anthology of Speculative Poetry #4*, and were just reprinted in Bob Frazier's *Burning With a Vision*, from one of which he got the title.

**Thrust:** What will your next novel be?

**Dann:** I am considering *Extra Duty*, and also find myself interested in the Starhiker universe again, and may do some stories about two of its alien characters. If those stories work out, they could end up becoming part of *Distances*, a novel I owe Doubleday. I also want to write a long story about an alternate world in which Leonardo da Vinci invents an ornithopter that works, as a weapon to win a local war. I am intrigued with the idea of da Vinci flying.

# WORDS & PICTURES



## movie reviews~darrell schweitzer

This column is going to be biased. I propose to review science fiction and fantasy films from the point of view of someone who reads books. I will not make excuses for a bad film on the grounds that it is a different medium. If the plot logic is flawed, or a concept is stupid, it remains so no matter whether the medium is print or film.

It can be argued that this approach may not be totally fair. It seems clearly true that this approach is not the one usually taken by movie reviewers in general, or even SF and fantasy movie reviewers in particular. While it is true that most Americans learned the fundamentals of reading while in school, most are fundamentally illiterate, and only a small percentage of the millions who flock to see the latest "sci fi" flicks have ever even opened a book of similar nature. If I were reviewing for the general movie-going audience, I wouldn't do it like this, but I think THRUST readers made up a specialized minority audience; you read. You also probably perceive SF as primarily a literary phenomenon, and your perceptions of SF films are inevitably altered. If you bought this copy of THRUST because you thought it might include goshwow previews of next month's new sci-fi extravaganza, you had better stop reading this column right here.

Don't say you weren't warned.

First, I'd like to look at a movie which actually ties in with a review of **Scanners** I wrote a few issues ago in THRUST\*. I would like to recommend David Cronenberg's film version of Stephen King's **The Dead Zone** (Paramount). For Cronenberg, who brought us such barf-bag specials as **Scanners** (see my previous review for a few choice words on this one) and **Videodrome**, it is an enormous and unexpected improvement. It actually looks like a real movie, on the level of an above-average made-for-TV effort. I would never have believed it possible, considering the source.

Some of you may recall my account of seeing **Scanners** in the company of a group of SF fans pretending to be a test audience. The folks who let us in were very dismayed by the fact that the audience was laughing in all the wrong places. **Scanners** has so many lapses in logic, self-indulgences and sheer stupidities, there was an inadvertent joke to please everyone (including some inscrutable ones only the computer experts understood). "Let's go see **Blood Beach** next," someone said afterwards. A couple of weeks later we went to see **The Howling**, which is no masterpiece, but looked like a "real movie" by comparison.

Now David Cronenberg has made a real movie. It may be the influence of Stephen King, who had a similar effect on John Carpenter, whose **Christine** is surprisingly restrained and coherent compared to his earlier work. King is such a natural storyteller that some of his talent rubs off, even on directors who normally can't tell character development from an extra bucket of Super-Bloody Gore Paint.

**DeadZone** is about a school teacher who gets bonked on the head, remains in a coma for years, and wakes up with the ability to foresee the future. He can tell what is going to happen to someone he touches (although in one case with a corpse, he could tell what **did** happen). This comes in handy when he shakes hands with a sleazy politician who is apparently destined to make his way into the Presidency and start a nuclear war. Since the hero has learned that he can change the future he sees, he sets out to assassinate the politician.

There are amateurish touches to the movie. A flashback scene in war-torn Poland looks particularly absurd, with Cassack-like partisans on horseback riding in the same direction as Panzer tanks and no one shooting at anyone. (And one shouldn't overlook the fact that the invasion of Poland took place so suddenly that there was no

\*see THRUST #17, Summer 1981 issue, page 30.

time for a guerilla movement to develop; the Germans quickly defeated the regular Polish army.) The overturned tank in the accident scene looks impressive looming out of the fog, but when the hero's car hits it, the tank breaks away like balsa wood.

The saving virtue of this film is that it is a **story** rather than a series of sensations, and it is about a person. The school teacher, played with some sensitivity by Christopher Walken, is someone who obviously hurts. Ultimately he is led to tragedy, but only because he understands what he must do. There is some loss of coherence in the subplot about a mad killer who is tracked down by the reluctant psychic, which doesn't have much to do with the political thug who will blow up the world, and is only marginally related to character development. But the screenwriter was in a bind here. In a lengthy Stephen King novel, there is plenty of room for such a subplot. In a feature-length film, there may not be. But when adapting a book, one has to include the most salient features. It isn't quite a smooth adaption, but the alternative would have been to leave out too much.

Pacing, photography and the like are competent. Walken, Brooke Adams (as the hero's fiancée), and Martin Sheen (mad politician) put in particularly good performances, and the supporting cast adequately supports. For Cronenberg, this is an incredibly good film. For anybody else, it would rate about a B+. And it is indeed science fiction; were it more smugly upbeat, such a story might have appeared in *ANALOG* during its psi period.

I am afraid that I have less good to say about the far more expensive, vastly more pretentious **Star Trek III: The Search for Spock**. Leonard Nimoy directs this time, and demonstrates some measure of ability: scenes work, things move. Only the first **Star Trek** movie was poorly directed, not this one or **Wrath of Khan**. But the script of **Search for Spock** is very weak; it is cheap in the most mawkish, childish manner possible. If you have not seen this film, let me viciously spoil the ending for you: Spock isn't dead. If you were surprised by that one, maybe you deserve the kind of treatment this movie gives its viewers. Spock is brought back in this movie by a method much more drawn out and far less visually exciting than the successive reanimations of Frankenstein's monster. That one intrusion of adult reality into the **Star Trek** universe, the heroic death of Spock at the end of **Star Trek II**, with its subsequent grief and suffering for the other characters, is clearly presented as only a brief intrusion, a leak to be plugged up.

It's time for furious backpedalling. Spock melded his brain with Dr. McCoy. His coffin was equipped (very conveniently) with anti-gravity devices, or something, and made a soft landing on the Genesis Planet, where the Genesis Effect seems to have cloned the old boy. (His old body entirely disappeared; no icky corpses allowed.) Kirk and friends, having been refused official permission, steal the Enterprise (which was going to be junked), recover the new Spock (a child who is growing years older by the minute), and scoot off to Vulcan, where Spock is restored by an arcane and incredibly ancient, terrifying, and difficult ritual which comes off without a hitch. Conflict, such as it is, is provided by a crew of Klingon caricatures, so ludicrously, hissably nasty that they would be just right to play the heavies on **The Muppet Show**.

The science of this film is pure 1930's pulp SF science. The Genesis Effect, a holdover from the second movie, is sort of a cosmic Alka-Seltzer. You drop the device on a barren world and, presto, it fizzles into an Earth-like planet, complete with oceans, oxygen atmosphere, and highly evolved plant life, which pops into existence in a matter of days, or even hours. I am reminded of the various "speeded up evolution" stories Edmond Hamilton used to write (e.g. "Isle of Changing Life," *THRILLING WONDER*, June, 1940) in which "radiation" causes one-celled organisms to evolve into dinosaurs right before the characters'

eyes. A truly whopping bit of thirties super-science. For a while, I was worried that the Genesis Planet (formerly an airless, cratered object) didn't even have its own sun, but in this movie we see a primary, at apparently about the right distance; but what would happen if the Genesis Device were used on Pluto? Would it supply its own heat?

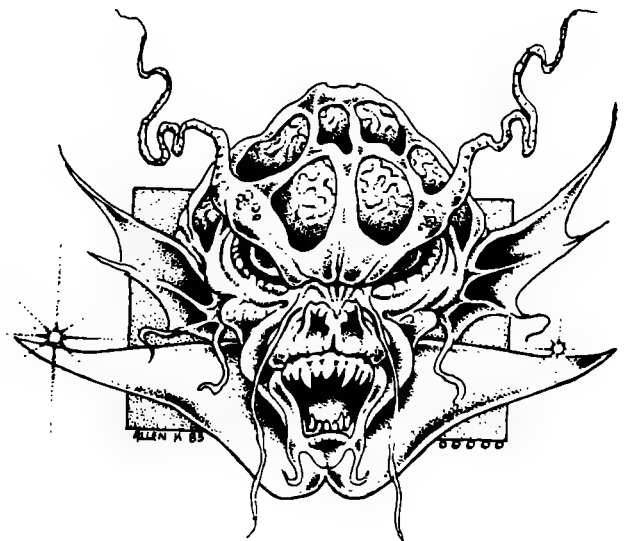
But get this: the awesome dohickey **doesn't work**, because the inventor (Kirk's long-lost son) cheated and used "protomatter", making the planet unstable. It snows in the desert. There are earthquakes. Flames roar out of the ground. Lava boils and flows, and eventually, the planet breaks up. Yet Mr. Spock's new body, growing from child-sized to Nimoy-sized in minutes, is a product of the planet and the same device. We must assume that he is somehow gaining mass from the planet, which won't hold together because of that shoddy "protomatter". Does Spock fall apart? We should be so lucky.

It can also be noted that the film is completely explicable in terms of standard wish-fulfillment fantasy. Vulcans are elves, terrible yet wonderful, and it is good to have a special, enchanted elf-friend to get you out of a pinch. But he has departed his mortal form, and his spirit is trapped in the Land of Perilous Magic. So our plucky band of heroes must go on a quest to save him. They are opposed by the nasty Demon Lord and his unsavory crew. In the end, having brought their elf-friend's body and soul to the City of Wonders, the heroes achieve enlightenment and their friend is restored to them, with the aid of the High Priestess of White Magic and her mystic followers.

This isn't science fiction, folks. The space opera trappings are but a very thin gloss over something that might have been written by Terry Brooks. The movie has nice visuals, particularly the interiors of the Enterprise's home base. But **lots** of films have nice visuals these days; good SF films need more than that. **The Search for Spock** is a devotional ritual for trekkies, with little to offer a sophisticated SF audience. (To be realistic, the next movie should begin with Kirk a third assistant sub-deputy dishwasher on Starbase One, and Scotty an electrician's apprentice, after hijacking the Enterprise, but don't hold your breath.)

And now, just to prove I can do it, I'm going to try to say something nice about a movie. Sort of.

**Greystoke** (Warner Brothers) is a beautiful film, both visually and, at times, for the story being told. It is supposed to be the "authentic" Tarzan, clearing away decades of campy movie clichés. But while it does raise Tarzan films to a new level, authentic it isn't, at least not all of the time.



Many of you may have read Harlan Ellison's review of this film in the August 1984 FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION. If not, I suggest that you go read it now. It gave me pause. I enjoyed the film very much, as did many others, but Harlan explains how writer Robert Towne's wondrous screenplay was ravaged by the Visagoths and left as a hollow travesty of its former self. This may be true. After all, Harlan read the original screenplay, we have not. There have also been indications of trouble from other sources. CINEFANTASTIQUE, in its May 1984 issue (page 13), confirms some of the stories: Rick Baker had a particularly hard time with director Hugh Hudson, when Hudson wouldn't let Baker see the daily rushes, and caused a prize ape suit to be riddled with bullets and arrows in the first scene to be filmed. But the real problem seems to lie in Hudson's vision of the film, which is primarily Tarzan in Scotland. Less than half of the film takes place in the jungle. **Greystoke** is therefore primarily a film about an apeman trying to adjust to civilization, not about a human growing up among apes.

In a newspaper interview, Hudson told how he had intended to film yet another half-hour of Scotland scenes, in which "John Clayton" (the word "Tarzan" is never spoken in the film) inherits his grandfather's estate and reverts to the primitive, dismissing the servants, letting the estate get run-down, bringing animals in the house, and so on. But "they" wouldn't let him film all that. I think that "they" must have done some judicious cutting of what was filmed as well.

Let's hear it for "them". The end result isn't Burroughs. It isn't what Towne intended either, apparently, and it isn't totally what Hudson intended. Rather some sort of balance was struck. The hybrid film is still very good. The jungle sequences, involving Tarzan's youth among the apes, are extraordinary. Then he is "rescued" by the Belgian D'Arnot and brought back to civilization. He can't adjust. He is much less the master of events than is Burroughs's Tarzan. At one point, D'Arnot tells him (paraphrasing very broadly) that he must overcome his jungle upbringing and his awkwardness among civilized people, to produce something new and superior to both the jungle and civilization. That of course would be the Tarzan we all know and love. But in this movie, John Clayton sheds his clothes, and goes back to the jungle, leaving Jane behind, in an ending of near-tragedy.

But it works, as a story of character on a more sophisticated level than the wish-fulfillment of Burroughs. It is not the "authentic" Tarzan, but a moving drama nonetheless. Although some of the "social" scenes drag a bit, overall the Scotland scenes contrast effectively with the African ones. It is, as a newspaper critic noted, half of a brilliant film spliced into half of a merely good one.

I spotted only one serious lapse in plausibility (accepting the basic premise, of course, of the imaginary species of apes). D'Arnot is hit by a native's arrow, which goes in his back below the ribs, and because of its barbs, must be pulled out by coming all the way through. At this point, Tarzan discovers him and nurses him back to health. It's difficult to believe that anyone could survive such a wound without medical treatment.

But there are many very good scenes. The fight with the tribal bully (ape) is fantastic. Tarzan, played well by Christopher Lambert, shows a mixture of ape fighting techniques and human cunning in winning the fight. Throughout the film he is a mixture of man and ape. When excited or distressed, he expresses himself in the way that comes naturally, as an ape. With a less capable actor, the result could have been ludicrous. Lambert's portrayal of Tarzan is therefore a real accomplishment.

So see this film. It may not be what you're expecting if you know Burroughs well, but it succeeds on its own terms quite well.

\* \* \*

**SHORT TAKES:** **Ghostbusters** (Columbia Pictures) is also

recommended. It's a milestone in the history of cinema in that it provides evidence that special effects are beginning to be assimilated as just another storytelling technique, rather than an end in and of themselves. There are many miles and many stones, but this is progress. **Ghostbusters** is a reasonably funny movie about a crew of quack parapsychologists (Bill Murray, Dan Ackroyd and friends) who go into business as household exorcists. They carry flamethrowers and lots of high-tech equipment, making a complete shamble out of the old convention of the cool, calm, professional psychic investigator. Sigourney Weaver plays the woman haunted by a Sumerian demon in her refrigerator (a parody of the haunted closet in **Poltergeist**) and a gigantic marshmallow man, stomping Manhattan in finest Godzilla fashion, is played by large quantities of white goo.

**Conan the Destroyer** (Universal Studios) is pretty funny too, although not all the humor is intentional. Some of the intentional humor (like Schwarzenegger's comic drunk scene) is merely painful. To steal a good line from J.B. Post, who remarked of the first Conan movie, "some of it is plain dumb; the rest is fancy dumb," most of this is fancy dumb. As such it is an improvement over its predecessor, and, minus John Millius' ponderous pretentiousness (the new director is Richard Fleischer), the series moves up to the comic book level (which figures, with a script by well-known comic book writers Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway). Not good comic book, mind you, but definitely comic book. There are actual scenes of dialogue, in which Conan speaks, people reply, and he responds to them. There are some nice special effects. Mostly bad acting; only the Evil Queen stands out as competent. The Innocent Young Thing (a virgin princess, no less) is the sort of girl they used to hire as an extra for Annette Funicello beach movies. Conan, having shed his previous sidekick, has acquired another who is even more useless and ridiculous. Fortunately, he sheds the whole supporting cast at the end of the film. We may yet hope for a good Conan movie, but look how long it has taken to get even a good Tarzan movie, and even then one not 100% Burroughs. The cycle of bad Conan movies may have just begun.

**Something Wicked This Way Comes** (Disney Studios): This one slipped in and out of theatres with great stealth. It is worth seeing, but is strictly for the Bradbury devotee. It is easy to see why it failed to elicit wide audience appeal. Bradbury's Green Town Illinois, circa 1920, is a fantasy that exists in Bradbury's mind. It isn't real. When the fantastic circus comes to town and intrudes into this, there isn't enough contrast to generate much tension. But there are many beautiful, menacing images. Jonathon Pryce is spectacular as the sinister circus owner, Mr. Dark. Overall, there is an excess icky-sweetness, and love conquers all too easily in the end. But it is a pretty film.

**Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom** (Starring you-know-who, directed by you-know-who): Very much last and least. This should be called **Indiana Jones and the Temple of Dumb**. Spielberg directs in his sleep: flashy, facile and empty beyond belief. The anti-gravity liferaft warns us early on. Indiana and friends bail out of a plane sans parachutes in a rubber liferaft, float several thousand feet, slide along a glacier, over a stretch of bare, rocky mountainside, over a cliff the size of the Grand Canyon, into a river through rapids, etc., and the raft never even gets punctured. Once it is totally clear that the heroes can't get hurt, no matter what, there is nothing left to watch but the stunts, which are admittedly good. There is no characterization nor any logic to the plot at any point. This is a roller-coaster, not a story. It broke box-office records because so many people wanted to see the sequel to **Raiders of the Lost Ark**. I can't imagine why anyone would want to see the next one.

-Darrell Schweitzer

# Results of the Third Annual THRUST AWARDS for 1983

The results of the **Third Annual Thrust Awards** have been tallied, covering science fiction and fantasy from the year 1983. The **Thrust Awards** were created to recognize the most disappointing SF and fantasy books, magazines and movies each year.

This year's **Thrust Awards** are based on 19 ballots received, which may not seem very impressive, but is a marked improvement over the previous two years (which saw 12 and 11 ballots respectively). I would like to think that **Thrust's** readers are finally beginning to get a feeling for how these awards work.

The next issue will include a ballot for the **Fourth Annual Thrust Awards**, covering the year 1984. I am also considering the possibility of including a "nominations list" with the ballot, to include candidates chosen by a select group of **Thrust** staff reviewers. Please write and let me know whether you think that would be a good or a bad idea.

And now, the envelopes please...

## MOST DISAPPOINTING NOVEL

No.	Novel	Points	Votes
1	<b>Valentine Pontifex</b> by Robert Silverberg	21	5
2	The Gods of Riverworld by Philip Farmer	20	6
3	Christine by Stephen King	18	4
4	Pet Sematary by Stephen King	16	4
5	The Nonborn King by Julian May	15	4
6	White Gold Wielder by Stephen Donaldson	11	5
7	Web of Light by Marion Zimmer Bradley	9	2
8	The Robots of Dawn by Isaac Asimov	7	3
-	Medusa: A Tiger By The Tail by Jack L. Chalker	7	3
10	Lyoness by Jack Vance	5	2

**Others nominated (one vote each):** 5 points: Damocles by Robert Sheckley; Orion Shall Rise by Poul Anderson; Conan the Unconquered by Robert Jordan; The "Lando Calrissian and the ..." Series by L. Neil Smith (3 books in 1983); The Crucible of Time by John Brunner; The First Book of Swords by Fred Saberhagen; Ancient Evenings by Norman Mailer.

4 points: Prince Ombra by Roderick MacLeish; Neveryona by Samuel Delany; The Dream Stone by C.J. Cherryh; Tea With the Black Dragon by R.A. MacAvoy; "Spaceways" Series by John Cleve; The Wounded Sky by Diane Duane; The Second Book of Swords by Fred Saberhagen; Millennium by John Varley; The Celestial Steam Locomotive by Michael Coney.

3 points: Worlds Apart by Joe Haldeman; The Tree of Swords and Jewels by C.J. Cherryh; The Shadow of the Ship by Robert Franson; The Wild Alien Tamer by Mike Resnick; Floating Dragon by Peter Straub.

2 points: Against Infinity; The Citadel of the Autarch; Operation Longlife; Magicians Gambit.

1 point: The Armageddon Rag; Cugel's Saga; The Wizard and the Warlord; The Void Captain's Tale.

**Comments:** For the first time, there is no runaway for

the most disappointing novel, with Silverberg's second Valentine novel barely edging out Farmer's final Riverworld novel, and two Stephen King novels not far behind. I find Silverberg's win supprising; I found **Valentine's Pontifex** to be on a par with **Lord Valentine's Castle**, especially considering that it is a difficult task to maintain a full compliment of sense of wonder in a sequel. I was also surprised to find the Asimov book in the top ten, but I guess all those years of waiting raises expectations.

In all, 39 novels received at least one nomination, many more than in any previous year, although only ten novels received multiple votes.

## MOST DISAPPOINTING COLLECTION

No.	Collection/Anthology	Points	Votes
1	<b>The Winds of Change</b> by Isaac Asimov	20	6
2	Midas World by Fred Pohl	18	4
3	The Face of Chaos, edited by Robert Lynn Asprin and Lynn Abbey	17	5
4	There Will Be War Volume II: Men of War, edited by Jerry Pournelle	12	3
5	The Sentinel by Arthur C. Clarke	10	4
6	Sector General by James White	5	2
7	Heroic Visions, edited by Jessica Amanda Salmonson	5	1
-	The 57th Franz Kafka by Rudy Rucker	5	1
-	The Best of Trek #6, edited by Walter Irwin and G.B. Love	5	1
-	Science Fiction: A Historical Anthology, edited by Eric S. Rabkin	5	1
-	The Fantasy Hall of Fame, edited by Robert Silverberg	5	1
-	Time Patrolman by Poul Anderson	5	1
-	The Dodd Mead Gallery of Horror	5	1
14	Fire From the Wine Dark Sea by Somtow Sucharitkul	4	2

**Others nominated (one vote each):** 4 points: Unicorn Variations by Roger Zelazny; The Zanzibar Cat by Joanna Russ; Terra SF II: The Year's Best European Science Fiction; Dark Company, edited by Lincoln Child; Magic For Sale by Avram Davidson; Against the Heart of Darkness.

3 points: Unaccompanied Sonata; The Year's Best Fantasy Stories 9, edited by Art Saha.

2 points: Lands of Never, edited by Maxim Jubowski (2 votes).

1 points: The Worlds of H. Beam Piper, edited by John F. Carr.

**Ineligible:** The Last Dangerous Visions, edited by Harlan Ellison.

**Comments:** Big name collections lead the list, as Asimov's collection of short stories (primarily from the last five years) edges out Pohl's collection-that-can-be-mistaken-for-a-novel. There are at least six readers of **Thrust** who are not impressed by Dr. Asimov's recent short fiction, despite the fan letters which continue to flow

into **Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine**. These major name collections are followed closely by the fifth Thieves' World anthology--which one may note has stories by each of its editors included. Some may be starting to tire of that series. The Pournelle theme anthology, part original and part reprint, may have gotten some votes just for its downer title. I found the votes for the Clarke collection interesting, since the book seems to have been well received critically.

In all, 25 books were nominated, with seven receiving more than one vote, many more than in previous years. Nominees included 13 single author collections, 4 original anthologies, 7 reprint anthologies, and one anthology containing both original and reprint stories.

#### MOST DISAPPOINTING MAGAZINE

No.	Magazine	Points	Votes
1	<b>Amazing (tie)</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>11</b>
-	<b>Analog (tie)</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>10</b>
3	Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine	35	10
-	Omni	35	9
5	The Twilight Zone	22	5
6	Fantasy and Science Fiction Magazine	12	4
7	Imago	9	3
8	Rigel	6	3

**Others nominated (one vote each):** Cinefantastique, Science Fiction Review, Fantasy Book, Locus, Epic Illustrated.

**Comments:** For the first time ever, there is a tie in the balloting for the Thrust Awards. Both **Analog** and **Amazing** received the exact same total points, although **Amazing** did get one more ballot, so both must be declared co-winners of this year's award. **Asimov's**, the winner for the last two years, has dropped to third place, attesting at least some approval for the improving editorship of Shawna McCarthy. (One must admit that the number of award-nominated stories which appeared in **Asimov's** in 1983 was impressive.) Last year, **Analog** was third, and **Amazing** was tied for fourth place. **Omni** seems to be maintaining a small but constant group of detractors, coming in fourth this year just as it did last year. **Twilight Zone** actually saw a favorable move this year to fifth place, after placing second last year. **F&SF** continues to place last among the major prozines. An interesting addition to the multiple vote-getters is **Imago**, the highly touted magazine which never appeared. (I must admit that I too found that disappointing on a very personal basis--I sent in subscription money for **Imago** which was never returned!) And finally, a few votes were once again received for **Rigel**--kind of a final goodbye kick. I thought they did very well under the circumstances, and am sorry to see them stop publication.

In all, it would seem that both **Asimov's** and **The Twilight Zone** became less disappointing since last year, while both **Amazing** and **Analog** took a step backwards.

#### WORST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION

No.	Movie or TV Presentation	Points	Votes
1	<b>Superman III</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>11</b>
2	Return of the Jedi	32	8
3	"V"	28	7
4	The Day After (TV movie)	23	7
5	Brainstorm	22	7
6	The Hunger	12	3
7	Twilight Zone - The Movie	9	3
8	The Man With Two Brains	6	2
-	Something Wicked This Way Comes	6	2

**Others nominated (one vote each):** 5 points: Whiz Kids

(TV series); 4 points: Never Say Never Again; 3 points: The Sword and the Sorcerer, Ator the Fighting Eagle, Jaws 3-D, Cujo, Christine, Hercules; 2 points: Yor: The Hunter From the Future, Friday the 13th Part 3-D; 1 point: Manimal (TV series), Spacehunter, Xtro, Wargames.

-----continued on page 29.

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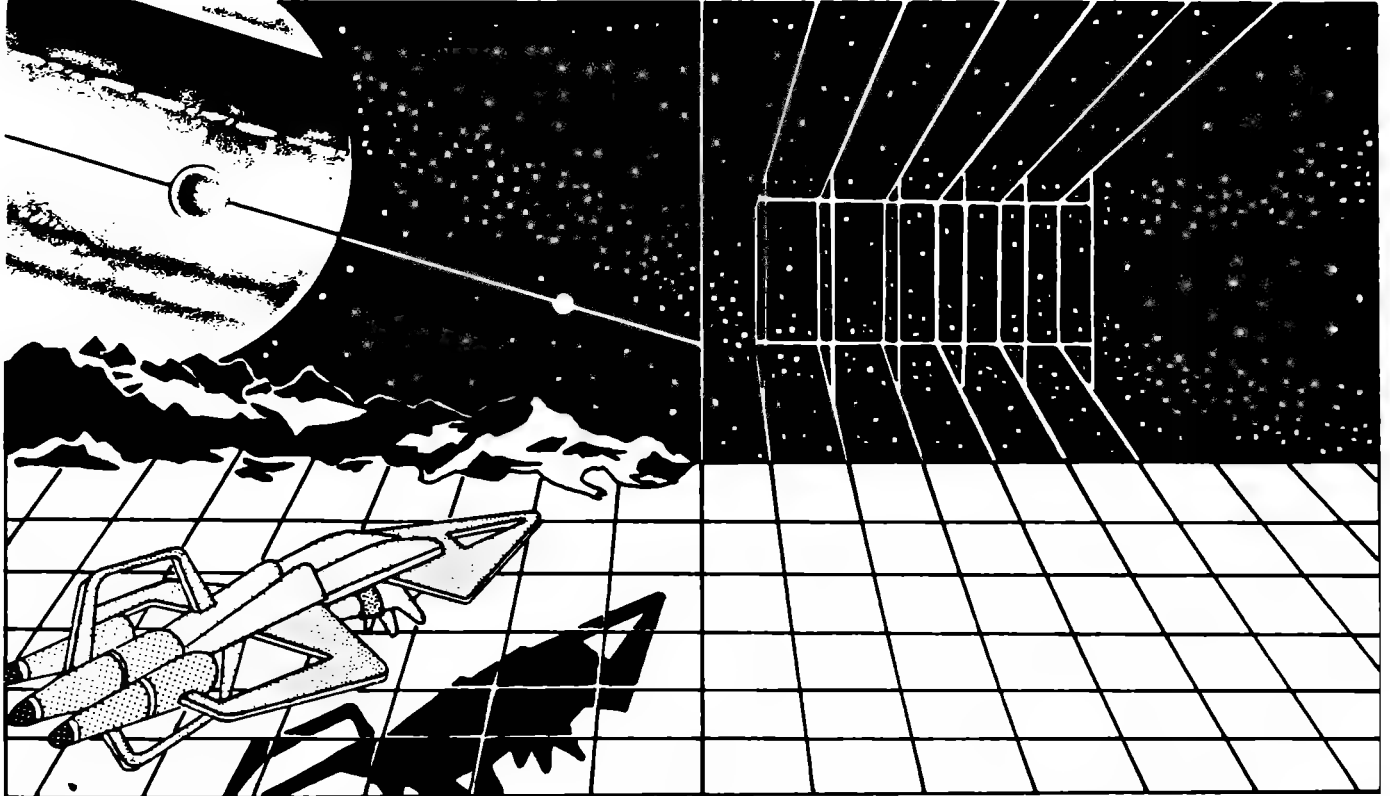
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# THE ALIENATED CRITIC



## DOUG FRATZ

Most of THRUST's current readers probably think of "The Alienated Critic" as the title of my editorial in each issue of THRUST, but it was actually originally used as the title of my regular column of general SF commentary and opinion, which I began in issue #7. In that first column, I commented on a number of different books and other topics of current interest. In issue #8, the column was continued with a feature article on the current science fiction in comic books. I wrote an "Alienated Critic" column for issue #9 reviewing the then current crop of new SF magazines, but it was squeezed out of the issue, and in fact never was printed. In issue #10, I instead used the column to do 21 short book reviews. And with issue #11, I decided to drop the idea of a regular column by me in THRUST to make room for other columnists, and moved the title "The Alienated Critic" to my editorial each issue.

Needless to say, I have decided to return to my original conception for this column, picking up where I left off so many years ago. The column will cover various science fiction-related topics each issue, at varying lengths. I will make every attempt to lean towards poignant opinions and away from nebulous natterings, but that goes without saying.

**Science and Pseudoscience Among the Technologically Illiterate:** The quality of our society's science education is a topic that has been much in the news recently. I must say that I have very little first hand data on this issue,

since most of the people I know are either scientists or science fiction fans/authors, both groups that are very high in scientific and technological literacy. Although I can imagine it would be a distressing feeling, I find it difficult to imagine what it would be like not to know and understand the basic physical and biological principles which make up reality as we know it and experience it every day.

What little data I do stumble across regarding the scientific literacy of high school graduates and American society in general seems quite distressing. What are the psychological effects on individuals in a highly technological society who do not understand the technology they use every day, nor even understand the basics of the scientific method and logical thought? I think that for me, such a void would lead to terrible feelings of being ineffectual, and even paranoia. What are the sociological effects of this? Is our society in danger of more than losing first place in technology, and the wealth that goes with it, to the Japanese and other countries?

Yet I have always found the science fiction community to be highly scientifically literate. That's not to say that everyone who reads or even writes science fiction has a perfect knowledge of all scientific principles or thought, but the field seems to have a very high average degree of scientific and technological literacy, something about which we can be rather proud.

I am occasionally disappointed, however. Those of you who read SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW undoubtedly read my letter

in the Summer 1984 issue regarding a letter by Bob Collins (editor of FANTASY REVIEW) published in the Spring 1984 issue of SFR. His main point was that it can't be argued that fantasy worlds are any less valid speculations than SF worlds, since we really don't know for sure if reality is real. (I simplified a bit, but that was the gist of it.) To quote Mr. Collins, "The laboratory scientist's naive faith in the 'reality' of his data has been questionable, to say the least, for several generations now." You mean this might all be an illusion? What Is Reality? And have you heard the one about the angels and the pin-head?

I recently found a rather trivial, but still somewhat disturbing, scientific goof in the June 1984 issue of OMNI. (Despite OMNI's penchant for the pseudoscientific fringes of conventional science, it is still a relatively literate magazine, scientifically speaking.) It was in the "Competition" section, where the winners were supposed to devise brilliant solutions to practical problems, thereby making use of science and the scientific method in every-day life. A very good idea for a competition, considering how trivial many of OMNI's competitions tend to be. The only problem was that they awarded \$25.00 as the third best "brilliant solution" to the following problem:

**Problem:** After pouring the first serving from my two-liter plastic bottle of cola, I realized that the remaining drink would go flat within a day or so.

**Solution:** Each time I poured a drink from the bottle I would squeeze the bottle enough to raise the liquid level near the rim. Then I would screw on the cap so that there was very little air in the container for the carbonation to escape into.

Truly brilliant. I trust that all of THRUST's readers can see the ludicrous nature of that solution. I wrote OMNI to point out that they had given \$25.00 for a scientifically invalid solution, and actually received back a letter from OMNI's Games Editor saying that I was one of several who caught them on that particular goof. This incidence is particularly disturbing, I think, because the person who sent in the above submission to OMNI's competition obviously **thought** himself to be scientifically knowledgeable.

And then there are cases, even in the SF field, of people just not bothering to do their arithmetic. For example, take a look at this quote by Don Wollheim, from his introduction to his **The 1984 Annual World's Best SF**:

While in London some time ago, I picked up a postcard in a small progressive book shop which carried this statement: "The money required to provide adequate food, water, education, health and housing for

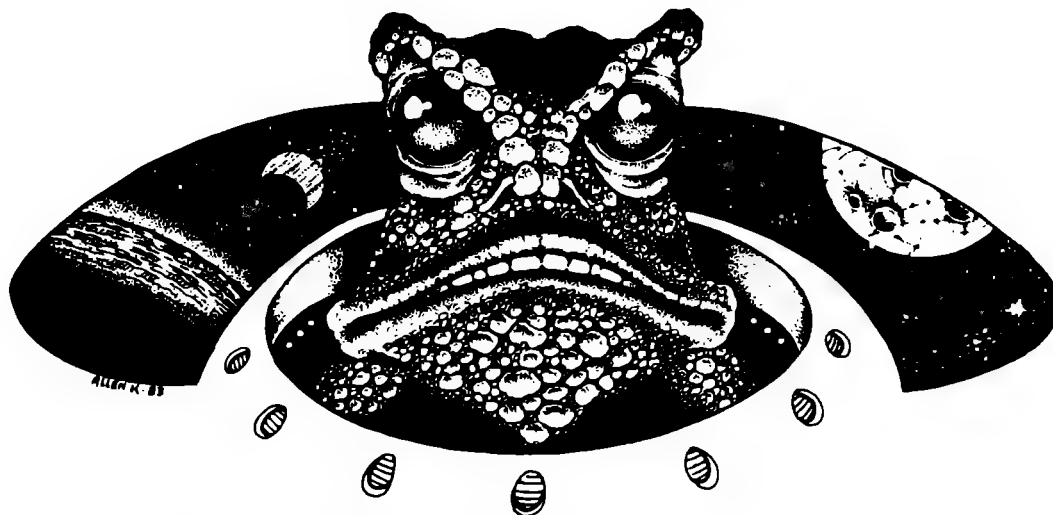
everyone in the world has been estimated at \$17 billion a year. It is a huge some of money...about as much as the world spends on arms every two weeks." This struck me at first as a startling statement but the more I thought about it, the more truthful it turned out to be. (—) With four billion people on Earth today, the great majority are very much in need.

Did you try the arithmetic? That's adequate food, water, education, health and housing for four billion people for a bit over \$4.00 a year per person! Just think, we could give adequate food, education, medical care, and housing to everyone in the whole world for only a tiny fraction of what we're now spending on those Federal programs in this country! Now that's what I call Voodoo economics...

The situation regarding scientific literacy is particularly bad in my area of scientific specialization, the environmental health sciences. Not only does the American public know virtually nothing about environmental science, but they have also been barraged for more than a decade with tons of pseudoscientific misinformation. It is to the SF's field's great credit that very little of that misinformation has found its way into the science fiction literature.

I did note recently that one of the more pervasive of the popular environmental myths was repeated offhandedly in the October 1984 issue of ANALOG, in a science column by Stephen L Gillett. Dr. Gillett, who appears to be either a chemist or biological scientist, was writing about the possibilities of alien lifeforms based on chlorine instead of oxygen. In the article, he notes that a desire for organisms to make themselves unappetizing could cause them to incorporate organic chlorine, apparently based on the reasoning that, after all, many of the most toxic pesticides (i.e. insecticides) are chlorinated hydrocarbons. He then goes on to note that, "As on Earth, such compounds would be toxic because they would be new." In addition to his basic fallacy of assuming that totally alien lifeforms would find the same things to be toxic as Earth organisms, that statement reiterates in plain language one of the primary Popular Myths of environmental toxicology: that chemical substances are toxic because they are new, and unknown to nature.

In fact, there is virtually **no** correlation between toxicity and whether a chemical species is found in nature or totally absent from nature. This particular myth first appeared in Rachel Carson's **Silent Spring** in the early 1960's, and has been repeated in various forms in dozens of other pseudoscientific treatises since, and seems to be considered common knowledge still be many so-called pro-environmental groups. In truth, some of the most toxic substances known are of natural origin, such as various



forms of mycotoxins, including the aflatoxins found in peanuts and many grains. The idea that natural organisms have evolved "defenses" against all natural substances and can be hurt only by new, synthetic chemicals, has never been consistent with the massive amounts of scientific data in existence.

Oh well, even ANALOG can be expected to allow a few mistakes in scientific accuracy to get into print...

**Et Tu, Silberberg?:** I trust that all of you who continue to read AMAZING were as bemused as I was to read Robert Silverberg's "Opinion" column in the November 1983 issue. That was the column, for those who missed it, in which Silverberg expressed his great dismay about the lack of science and hardcore speculation in today's science fiction, and more specifically in the Nebula Award-nominated SF of 1982. (He had to read them all because he was the editor of the annual Nebula Award anthology.) Among the novels in which he found no significant speculative content were Heinlein's *Friday*, Wolfe's *Sword of the Lictor*, and Dick's *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*. He also found most of the short fiction nominees of 1982 similarly lacking in scientific and social speculation.

Huh? Is this the same Robert Silberberg who burst back into the SF scene after a long hiatus with such hard-hitting tour de forces of speculation as *Lord Valentine's Castle*, *Majipoor Chronicles*, and *Valentine Pontifex*? In truth, of course, these books are archetypical science fantasies of the type which are leading the movement which Silverberg is opining to be doing damage to the SF field. At first, while reading this article by Silverberg, I thought it would turn out to be tongue-in-cheek, with an ending about how "we all have taken the easy way out by writing popular pabulum for the masses," but that didn't happen. The piece ends instead with a lament about how much trouble the field is in if the SFWA itself feels that the stories nominated for the Nebula represent what science fiction at its finest ought to be.

I think maybe Silverberg has wiped from his mind that he wrote the *Majipoor* books. What's your theory?

**Tough Bosses:** In follow-up to last year's entertainingly nasty fiasco with Pocket Books (owned by Simon & Schuster), the Science Fiction Writers of America, and the Scott Meredith agency (with former Pocket Books editor David Hartwell left out in the cold), I found an amusing follow-up in the July 19, 1984 Washington Post business section. It seems that FORTUNE magazine did a survey this year to list the nation's "toughest bosses." Included on FORTUNE's list of the ten most hard-nosed senior executives was Simon & Schuster President Richard Snyder, cited for his "quick, flaring temper that has driven away talented employees." No surprises there.

**Some Award Winning Thoughts:** Between the time I am writing this column and the time you are reading it, the winners of this year's Hugo Awards will be announced at the World Science Fiction Convention in Los Angeles. Despite this fact, I plan to throw caution to the wind and discuss this year's nominees (and non-nominees) and even make some fool-hardy predictions.

Although I consider this a good year for novel-length SF, due to the large number of good novels published, I find this year's nominated novels a weak group. Varley's novel is a very good book overall, but one with lots of flaws. McCaffrey's book is just another Pern reiteration. The best books of those nominated are by newcomers, Brin and MacAvoy. The two books I consider the best of 1983, Benford's *Against Infinity* and Wolfe's *The Citadel of the Autarch* weren't even nominated. My prediction is that in this weak field, Asimov's *The Robots of Dawn* will get him his second straight Hugo. (Remember, you heard it here first.)

Among the novellas, "Hardfought" by Greg Bear should

win over all the other almost-as-good novellas by non-names nominated this year. But it's been a good year when novellas of the caliber of Silverberg's "Homefaring," Bishop's "Her Habaline Husband," and Pohl's "Lord of the Skies" fail to get a Hugo nomination!

The novelette Hugo is a bit more up for grabs. Robinson's "Black Air" is certainly good enough to win, as is Watson's "Slow Birds," but both seem more Nebula-type stories than Hugo-type stories, both being very subtle works. Both Bear's "Blood Music" and Willis' "The Sidon in the Mirror," I believe, have important flaws. That leaves George R.R. Martin's "The Monkey Treatment," which I predict will win the Hugo, because it tickles the typical SF-fan sense of humor. Too bad too, because that story's not major Martin, and a lot of better novellas weren't even nominated (Dann's "Blind Shemmy," for instance).

For short story, I think Dozois' "The Peacemaker" will win, even though Nebula Award winners seldom win Hugos. I would be very disappointed if Pohl's "Servant of the People" wins in a year when his best short fiction work isn't even nominated. I am also surprised that Kennedy's "Her Furry Face" didn't get nominated; it's well done, and just the type of story SF fans usually are fond of.

I'd like to think that *Dream Makers*, Platt's excellent book of interviews, will win the best non-fiction book Hugo, but the art vote will probably all go to Rowenna Merrill's art collection, while the literary vote is split among several. Spinrad has an outside chance because of "Staying Alive" being run in LOCUS--but I wonder if anyone at all bought the book version from Donning?

The Dramatic Presentation Hugo nominees aren't very dramatic this year. My guess is that *Return of the Jedi* will edge out *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, despite the latter having been a much better movie. The rest of the field is shockingly weak--*Brainstorm* (the movie without one), *The Right Stuff* (the movie without any), and *Wargames* (a good movie with an incredibly stupid ending).

I predict that David Hartwell will win this year's Best Editor Hugo on the sympathy vote. If I'm right, I hope David includes his thanks to his former bosses in his acceptance speech. But Terry Carr always has a chance, and Ed Ferman remains the man to beat. I think that Shawna McCarthy could have a chance if ASIMOV'S continues to improve. Note that George Scithers, however, doesn't get nominated any more...

I think Rowena Morrill has a shot of dethroning Michael Whelan for the Best Professional Artist award, with her having the only major art book out last year. We'll see. Barclay Shaw is a long shot, despite those nice Ellison covers.

**Best Semi-Prozine?** This is the old best-fanzine list, with WHISPERS replacing FILE 770. Ho hum, LOCUS again. Who cares? THRUST, after all, wasn't even nominated (sour grapes, sour grapes). As for the new-and-improved Best Fanzine category, now Mike Glycer and FILE 770 will finally get his Hugo. I guess it is deserved after all these years of being the only true fanzine nominated, but I really have no way of knowing, since Glycer won't send me FILE 770 for some reason.

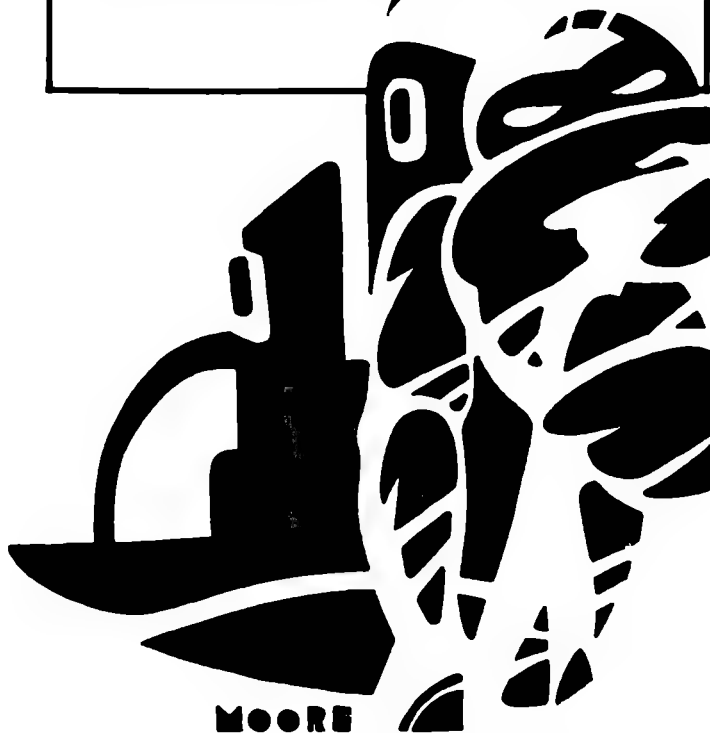
For fanwriter, since Geis is the only one of the nominees with an audience of more than a couple of hundred people, he's sure to win again. As for Fan Artist, I keep expecting Rotsler to win again sometime, but I think maybe the Gilliland dynasty has just begun.

The Campbell? Novel authors are always favored in this award for some reason, and MacAvoy is the only nominee with a superior novel out in 1983. Looks like she's got it. (Unless Joseph Delaney is a lot more popular than I think he is...)

Well, that's it. Were you keeping count? How many did I get right?

**Coming Next Column:** More of the same, only different.

# REVIEWS books, ETC.



**THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION: FIRST ANNUAL COLLECTION,**  
edited by Gardner Dozois (Bluejay Books, 1984, 575  
pp., \$9.95)

**THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR #13,** edited by Terry  
Carr (Baen Books, 1984, 384 pp., \$3.50)

**THE 1984 ANNUAL WORLD'S BEST SF,** edited by Donald A.  
Wollheim (DAW Books, 1984, 256 pp., \$2.95)

We're back to three best-of-the-year anthologies in 1984 for the first time in several years--Dozois picks up after a several year hiatus when he lost Dell (paperback) then Dutton (hardcover) a publishers, and Carr deftly skips from Pocket Books to Baen Books without missing a beat--and just in time. 1983 was an **extraordinary** year for good short science fiction. Excellence goes very deep in the list of novellas, novelettes and short stories published within the genre last year, and in a wide variety of styles and subject matter as well.

In all, this year's anthologists had at least one hundred stories, by my estimate, which can be consider as at least very good science fiction or fantasy. Science fiction magazines throughout 1983 seemed to routinely contain one or two very good to excellent stories per issue, with the greatest improvement, I think, being shown by ISAAC ASIMOV'S.

These three anthologies present ample proof of the strength of short SF in 1983. In all, thirty-nine stories are included, with Carr and Wollheim each choosing ten stories, and Dozois picking an amazing twenty-five stories. Only four stories are duplicated between the Dozois and Carr books, only two between Dozois and Wollheim, and **no**

stories are duplicated between Wollheim and Carr. Yet these are all anthologies which compare favorably with those of previous years, and in the case of Wollheim's book, which I've usually felt in previous years was the weakest of the best-of anthologies, shows a marked improvement in overall story quality over previous years.

With the impressive number of good fiction to choose from this year, possibly the best method to evaluate the selections in these anthologies is to look at the quality of the stories chosen by each editor which were picked by neither of the other two.

The mammoth Dozois volume includes many, of course, not included elsewhere, nineteen stories in all. Among the best of these are "Cicada Queen" by Bruce Sterling, a highly imaginative hard SF novella, the subtle but powerful "Multiples" by Robert Silverberg, and two suprisingly good historical quasi-fantasies, "Black Air" by Kim Stanley Robinson and "Manifest Destiny" by Joe Haldeman. "Her Furry Face" by Leigh Kennedy also stands out. If there is any criticism that can be made of the Dozois selections, it is that he has seemed to favor shorter stories, while missing some excellent novellas, of which he included only one, the hard SF tour de force "Hardfought" by Greg Bear. Dozois also included a number of light, humorous or tongue-in-cheek stories, possibly in an attempt to make the 250,000-word volume more easily readable through varying the style and tone of the stories presented. Included are George R.R. Martin's "The Monkey Treatment" which, despite its winning the Locus Award as best novelette, I consider to be a good, but trivial Martin story; Avram Davidson's humorous "Full Chicken Richness", and R.A. Lafferty's typically eclectic "Golden Gate". For better or worse, only the Carr volume also included any stories (one) of this nature.

Terry Carr is to be commended as being the only editor to include Michael Bishop's excellent "Her Habaline Husband." His other unique selections, however, are not as outstanding as I have come to expect from Terry Carr. Silverberg's "Amanda and the Alien" is a clever tongue-in-cheek story, but minor Silverberg. "Servant of the People" is only a journeymen effort, leaning a bit toward didacticism, and a story I think has been overrated. "Scenes From the Country of the Blind" by John Sladek is a good, but not outstanding story about temporary scientists investigating ESP. Of the other stories picked solely by Carr, Cherry Wilder's "Kaleidoscope" is a good, haunting story, and Richard Cowper's "The Tithonian Factor" is a quietly powerful story; both good, if not outstanding choices for the anthology.

Donald Wollheim picked up two brilliant novellas passed up by both Dozois and Carr: "Homefaring" by Robert Silverberg and "In the Face of My Enemy" by Joseph Delaney. But the surprising strength of Wollheim's volume this year is the number of fine stories included which were overlooked by not only the other anthologists, but probably many SF critics as well. Take for instance "The Nanny" by Thomas Wyle and "As Time Goes By" by Tanith Lee; both are excellent hard SF stories absent from many "best of the year" lists. "The Leaves of October" is an original and well handled short story, and possible the most moving SF story with an environmentalist theme since LeGuin's "The Word for World is Forest". "The Harvest of Wolves" by Mary Gentle is a subtly effective story by an author with whom I am totally unfamiliar. In fact the only two weaker stories in the volume are ones by older, big-name writers; Fred Pohl's "Spending a Day at the Lottery Fair" and Isaac Asimov's "Potential" are both, in my view, relatively minor works by these two well-known and respected SF authors.

These three anthologies do indeed, however, include a substantive number of the best SF short fiction of 1983. The strength of the short SF produced last year is adequately in evidence in these volumes. But possibly the greatest testimonial to the quality of the 1983 output of the science fiction field is the quality of many of the

stories not able to be included among these thirty-nine stories chosen by three of the best editors in the field. Among the short stories of 1983, neither "The Peacemaker" (Nebula Award winner) by Gardner Dozois nor "Speech Sounds" by Octavia Butler were included. (Dozois was undoubtedly afraid he would be criticized for including it in his own volume.) Of the novelettes overlooked, "Street Meat" by Norman Spinrad, "The Black Current" by Ian Watson and "The Monkey's Bride" stand out. Three of the better novellas overlooked included "Seeking" by David Palmer, "The Gospel According to Gamaliel Crucus" by Michael Bishop, and "Cascade Point" by Timothy Zahn. Any of these could equally well have been included in one or more of these three best of the year anthologies.

Many talented veterans the field have returned to write excellent short SF--Silverberg was perhaps the most notable in 1983 with three or four excellent stories. But the remarkable strength of the current SF short fiction production is the amazing number new writers constantly entering the field.

After reading these three books, one is tempted to speculate that the SF/fantasy genre has become the last bastion of modern English short fiction. These three anthologies just may have been the three best collections of short fiction published last year. The SF field has a lot of which to be proud.

- Doug Fratz

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**ONE WINTER IN EDEN** by Michael Bishop (Arkham House, 1984, ? pp., \$13.95)

This is Bishop's second Arkham House collection. The first one, **Blooded on Arachne**, appeared in 1982. **One Winter in Eden** contains a dozen stories, an introduction by Thomas Disch, illustrations throughout by Andrew Smith, and jacket illustration by Raymond Bayless. With rare exception, such as one science fiction tale set on Mars, the stories in this collection are about the here and now, and about real people who find themselves in unusual situations. Not all stories can be labeled as fantasy, but most can, and all of them are marked as distinct literary moments in the life of a writer.

The title story, "One Winter in Eden", is a wonderful study of people and the Southern ideology. It chronicles the tensions which result from racial slurs and taken-for-granted assumptions which a dispassionate dragon finds hard to understand.

"Seasons of Belief" is a tall tale about tall tales. "Cold War Orphans" is an outstanding story about love, hope and being young; one wonders if it isn't autobiographical as well. "The Yukio Mishima Cultural Association of Kudzu Valley, Georgia" is an outlandish yarn about what happens when an entire town starts reading the works of a Japanese writer and taking the novels seriously, and is both funny and intelligent. "Collaborating" centers on the life and times of a two-headed man. "Within the Walls of Tyre" is an unexpected journey into quiet horror, and "Out of the Mouths of Olympus" is about an adolescent's search for self-identity on Mars.

This collection also contains Bishop's Nebula Award-winning "The Quickening," a fine, thought-provoking story about society's reorganization after the entire Earth's population is instantly and inexplicably geographically scrambled. The search for a new order begins, but a few people accept the challenge of accepting life without the sociological conventions that inhibit change for the better. "The Quickening" is a bold experiment in which Bishop starts from scratch and says something important. In fact, it deserved to be the title story.

A large body of Bishop's work highlights Southern locals and attitudes. This emphasis on the American South often transcends the futuristic or fantastic elements of his stories. It is misleading to describe Michael Bishop

as a science fiction writer or a fantacist. He is, more accurately, one of the most distinguished artists presently working within the genre, whose work is characterized first and foremost by an obvious commitment to literary excellence. There are few writers in the SF field as talented as Michael Bishop, and **One Winter in Eden** provides further evidence of that fact.

- David Pettus

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**WORLDS APART** by Joe Haldeman (Ace Science Fiction Books, 1984, 227pp., \$2.95).

The second book of Joe Haldeman's **Worlds Trilogy** is finally out in paperback, and overall **Worlds Apart** is a strong addition to the excellent story begun in **Worlds**. This novel begins exactly where the first one ended, with the destruction of Earth's civilization through nuclear

war, followed by a biological warfare agent which kills every human over 16-20 years old (or as they die as they get to that age). The only human civilization remains on a single surviving "World" (a very large space colony), New New York, where the female protagonist of the story lives.

Haldeman is a master at achieving emotionally powerful fiction through the use of simple, almost abbreviated, narrative techniques. Some readers may find annoying his penchant for abrupt jumps forward in the narrative, or a few paragraphs which skip over months or even years of important occurrences to get to what the author feels is even more important in the lives of his characters.

The characters in this book lean strongly towards the Heinleinian archetypes--the strong, competent individualists whose occasional emotional problems are solved in minutes, if not seconds, through rational thought processes, and the almost totally unsympathetic, dangerously irrational and/or incompetent characters--as are virtually all of Joe Haldeman's characters. I like Heinleinian characters just fine in my hard science SF, but I do find Haldeman's children of Earth in this book a bit disturbing. You see, when all the adult humans die on Earth (except, luckily, for the female protagonist's Earth-born lover who survives because of an endocrinological problem), all the children under the age of 16-20 years are left to fend for themselves. And, since the biological agent is still active, all these children die when reaching about that age. Haldeman has these children form incredibly gruesome and bloody cults, mostly based on a quasi-religion centered on a book by Charles Manson, and engage in ruthless barbarism which some readers with weak stomachs may have trouble handling, and all within a few months of the holocaust. One gets the feeling that the author may seriously think of children as hideously cruel little monsters, always just moments away from total debauchery. (Then again, maybe Joe just thought it would make a good gripping story...)

One problem with the packaging: the Ace paperback version gives no mention that **Worlds Apart** is a sequel to **Worlds** and the second book of a planned trilogy. In fact, the only mention of another Joe Haldeman novel is the backcover blurb, "A novel of future survival by the author of **The Forever War**." (After all these years, is Joe still "best known" as author of that, his first major novel?) This is undoubtedly due to the fact that **Worlds** was published in paperback by Pocket Books, and Ace doesn't want to promote their edition of the first book. But this deception could lead to some angry readers who can't figure out why this book starts in the middle of the story, and ends in the middle of the story as well.

If you haven't read any of this trilogy so far, you may want to wait for the third volume and read the series straight through. But eventually, by whatever manner, this is another Haldeman story well worth reading.

- Doug Fratz

**THE HELIX AND THE SWORD** by John C. McLaughlin (Doubleday, 1983, \$13.95; Tor Books, 1984, 293 pp., \$2.95)

John McLaughlin is the author of five critically acclaimed science books. He is best known as a life science writer and one would tend to expect that success as a science writer would be enough for any man alive (except Isaac Asimov), but McLaughlin apparently wants more, so here we see his first science fiction novel.

First novels are often a drag to read; it usually takes time to learn the craft of writing fiction, even for those proficient in non-fiction writing, and first novels by known non-fiction writers are often projects launched by publishers in hopes of bigger and better things in the future. Publishers usually don't expect to make lots of money on hardcover first novels of unknown writers, although Doubleday takes more chances than most publishers today and are to be commended.

Writing non-fiction about science and writing science fiction are two very different things. Proficiency in one does not guarantee proficiency in the other. In fact, the cool, analytical style needed for good science writing could be expected to hinder the warm, stylistic mood needed for fiction to work properly. It is surely a rare artist who can switch from one to the other.

Yet, McLaughlin makes the transition look **easy**. **The Helix and the Sword** is a good science fiction novel, almost completely lacking in all the most common "first novel" mistakes. Plot development and characterization above average, and the universe which McLaughlin creates is surprisingly complex and entertaining. The novel could be said to be "over-cerebral", but that is true of much good SF. The story focuses on the life of Dyson Tessier in the year 5740. The Earth has long been abandoned, and interplanetary space harbors countless empires where synthetic life has replaced the need for tools and machines. All the billions of humanity have adjusted to the void and the limitless energy surrounding them. The economics and sociology of these people are fully realized, and religion takes the form of a multi-dimensional variation of evolution, the Forces of Selection, and the principles of Heisenberg. **The Helix and the Sword** is an ingenious book in which Dyson Tessier, with his super-intelligent cheetah and a living spaceship called Catuvel, travel Earthward to be the first to visit the lonely planet in several millennia. Earth has changed greatly over the centuries; overgrown rats have taken the place of men, just as man replaced the dinosaur.

The book contains maps, glossary and chronology. McLaughlin writes very detailed fiction, as if he has been doing it for many years. Carl Sagan isn't the only science writer making the transition to science fiction these days. John McLaughlin is a formidable new talent of which SF readers should take note. If succeeding books demonstrate the growth and obvious potential of this new writer, then they will be very good indeed. But it will not be too badly disappointing if his next novel is only as good as this first one. **The Helix and the Sword** can be well recommended.

- David Pettus

**UNICORN VARIATIONS** by Roger Zelazny (Timescape Books, 1983, 214 pp., \$14.95; Science Fiction Book Club edition).

This latest collection of Zelazny's short fiction includes a wide mix of stories, picking up some written as early as 1964, along with more recent material. As such, it is very much a mixed bag, with the truly excellent works diluted by some of his most minor and least memorable work.

There are twenty stories and two essays included, and a few of these stories are Zelazny at his best. "Home is the Hangman" is easily the best in the collection, and one of the best SF stories ever; it is mystery/SF at its best,

and worth buying the collection for all by itself if you have never read it. "Go Starless in the Night" is a very strong SF short story about a cryogenically preserved mind being revived for mental discussions with someone who claims to be future humans, but the brain slowly realizes must be malevolent aliens. (This story, mostly dialogue and the thoughts of the protagonist, would make an **excellent** radio drama!) "My Lady of the Diodes" is one of several stories included which were first printed years ago in fanzines, and is a computer story which remains surprisingly undated considering that it was written in 1970. "The Horses of Lir" is a touching mythic fantasy, also Zelazny at his best. The title story to the collection is a clever SF/fantasy about playing chess with a unicorn from another dimension, with the help of a Bigfoot coach. In a similar vein, "The George Business" is a very funny knight-and-dragon fantasy story.

The large number of minor stories which unfortunately dilute this collection are mostly short works which take up little space. "The Last of the Wild Ones" fails in its valiant attempt to make its "cars gone wild" storyline believable, by following the wild horse motif too closely in the details (i.e. why no airplanes?); a good effort on a terminally-dumb idea. "The Naked Matador" is a Hemingway pastiche which fails to make **any** of the key information needed to understand what really happened, leaving the reader with all questions unanswered in a purposefully enigmatic ending. Two of the stories included are of historical interest only: "Dismal Light," a precursor to **Isle of the Dead** which is an interesting anecdote without apparent point in and of itself, and "The Force that Through the Circuit Drives the Current" is a marginally interesting precursor to "Home is the Hangman." Other stories included range from good ("Angel, Dark Angel," "Walpurgisnacht") to nearly incomprehensible drivel ("But Not The Herald," "Fire and/or Ice," "Exeunt Omnes," "A Very Good Year,") and just about every level in between.

When Zelazny is good in his short fiction, there are only a few dozen in the field who can match him. Despite the unfortunate range of quality of the stories, if you haven't already read the best half dozen or so stories in this collection, then get this volume and see what you've missed.

- Doug Fratz

**THE VENUS BELT** by L. Neil Smith (Del Rey Books, 1981, 211 pp., \$2.25).

**THE RAINBOW CADENZA** by J. Neil Schulman (Simon and Schuster, 1983, 264 pp., \$14.95).

Here are second novels by two writers bound to be linked together due to their similar names and the fact that they began writing science fiction of a libertarian nature at about the same time. **Venus Belt** is the sequel to Smith's popular **The Probability Broach** (1980) which won the 1981 Prometheus Award for the best libertarian novel. **Rainbow Cadenza** is Schulman's dazzling second novel--not a sequel to his first novel, **Alongside Night** (1979), but rather an impressive fulfillment of that first novel's promise, and a top contender for the 1984 Prometheus Award.

Even though Schulman hit the SF scene first, Smith has become much better known because he is both fast and prolific, with five novels in the Broach series already in print and the three Landro Calrissian books published so far since 1983. Schulman, on the other hand, took four years between his first and second novels and has no series, sequels or spinoffs to his credit (or discredit).

So we have this unlikely combination of second novels. Smith takes Win Bear and his friends off on a tour of the Solar System, while Schulman embarks on a double tour-de-force which involves an art form called lasography and rapping satire in which young women are forced to serve as prostitutes in the Peace Corps. Two vastly different

stories, yet both just happen to include a trip to colonies in the asteroid belt where the characters are treated to the best in libertarian culture and zero-gee hijinks.

If Smith was a little worse and Schulman a bit better, I'd say that one is sloppy seconds and the other the second coming, but the case is really not that extreme. Smith started strong but opted for repeating himself endlessly, while Schulman started slowly, proceeded slowly, and came through with a real winner the second time out. Nevertheless, these are both important and dynamic young writers who promise much, and should deliver once the dust clears.

It's going to be interesting to watch these two over the coming decades--the tortoise and the hare of libertarian science fiction!

- Neal Wilgus

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**CONSCIENCE PLACE** by Joyce Thompson (Doubleday Books, 1984, 225 pp., \$13.95)

**Conscience Place** is a novel with real feeling and significance. It is a unique story of utopia both created and destroyed by a vile combination of science and politics. It is a thoughtful book, even disturbing in its depiction of life and people, which nonetheless captures the reader's imagination in a quiet, dignified manner. It is a distressing, deterministic book, but containing a humanistic, hopeful message.

The Place is a secret settlement in the West. There live the People, who know nothing of the outside world. The People live in peace. There is no violence, jealousy, no suffering in the Place. The People don't even have words for these things. They know only what they are told by Brother Alice, moral leader of the Place, who speaks for the Fathers.

Utopia?

The People are children of nuclear accident victims. They are mutants, physically and emotionally deformed, some of them having extra fingers, eyes, useless limbs or no limbs at all. Gross deviation from the human norm is their common bond, though they don't know it, and the outside world knows nothing of them (and probably wouldn't care about them if they did).

Brother Alice is one of the People, or so the People believe. Actually, she is a social scientist from the outside, disguised as a mutant, who works for the Fathers, a small band of scientists and politicians. They alone know about the Place, and for a decade have been using the People as a group on which to perform sociological experiments.

Sociology is one thing, but when the Fathers decide to use the People for genetic experimentation, Brother Alice refuses to let them. She warns the People, and tells them who they are, since she loves them and in spirit is one of them. Brother Alice prepares the people to fight the Fathers, and sends her lover, a wheelchair-restricted hermaphrodite, out into the world of "normal" people to tell them about the Place and seek help.

**Conscience Place** is timely and provocative, one of those books which stands out as more than entertainment, but less than a classic. The characters are fully realized, and their code of behavior illustrated through action, not long explanations. The prose is clear but distinctive, and while it is not an adventure novel, the pace is brisk and never lets up.

**Conscience Place** is a powerful reading experience. It will soon be published in England, France and West Germany, and film rights have been optioned; the book could easily find a wide readership. It certainly deserves to do so.

- David Pettus

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**CODE OF THE LIFEMAKER** by James P. Hogan (Del Rey Books, 1983, 341 pp., \$?; Science Fiction Book Club)

James P. Hogan is the Arthur C. Clarke of the 1980's. (Well, maybe that is not a very apt comparison--after all, Clarke is still alive and productive.) They are both strong on science and plot, but weak in creating memorable characterization. This is the ninth book for Hogan, whose best known works include the Giants' trilogy, *Thrice Upon a Time*, *Voyage From Yesteryear*, and *The Genesis Machine*.

There is nothing wrong with being an idea man, and the idea behind this book is fascinating. Somewhere around 1,000,000 B.C. a vast alien robot mining ship is hit by super-nova radiation, and crash-lands on Titan (Saturn's largest moon). By accident, the robots develop self-awareness. By the time 21st Century on Earth rolls around, the robot culture is roughly equivalent to the Middle Ages, or at best, Cromwellian England.

Inevitably, this alien robot culture is discovered by human unmanned landers on Titan. The good old Military Industrial Complex is the major backer of Western space exploration, and still looking for any way to get a jump on the Russians, so they send a manned fusion-drive ship to investigate. The crew include a self-proclaimed para-psychologist and psychic, and an arch-debunker of the paranormal. After establishing communication with the robots, they discover a plot is afoot to turn the "Taloids" into obedient slaves; Earth's rulers doubt the robots' self-awareness. To thwart this scheme, they decide to create a religion for the Taloids, since they lack a moral code to keep them from killing each other, and have no sense of mysticism or the supernatural. They do this by using Christianity as a model, duplicating the circumstances that brought it about on Earth through means of advanced technology.

The paranormal debunker reminded me of The Amazing Randi. The book itself reminds one of various chapters of human history, such as our early dealings with the American Indians. The novel raises a number of philosophical and moral questions--does the end sometimes justify the means?--while still managing to be entertaining. If you love hard science SF, you won't want to miss this one.

- W. Ritchie Benedict

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**MIDAS WORLD** by Frederik Pohl (Tor Books, 1984, 316pp., \$2.95)

**Midas World** is a collection of interrelated stories about robots. The action begins with Pohl's classic "The Midas Plague," which first appeared in *GALAXY* in 1954, and ends with "The New Neighbors," which appeared in *F&SF* last year. The stories work well together, although a couple--"The Servant of the People" and "The Farmer on the Dole"--are much like earlier work by Jack Williamson. The not-so-classic sequel to "The Midas Touch," "The Man Who Ate the World," is also included, having first appeared in *GALAXY* in 1956.



The most ambitious piece in the book is a 78-page story about living in space entitled "The Lord of the Skies." That story alone is worth the price of the book, and readers will enjoy Pohl's crisp style and unique perspective throughout the collection. Recommended.

-David Pettus

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**SCIENCE FICTION**, edited by Rose Sayre (Pig Iron Press, P.O. Box 237, Youngstown, OH 44501, 1983, 96 pp., \$5.95)

Since 1975, Pig Iron Press has released ten outstanding literary anthologies. The tenth anthology, **Science Fiction**, offers the same exceptional quality and originality of the previous collections. Visually stunning and stimulating to read, the handsome soft-cover paperback will undoubtedly become a science fiction collector's item.

**Science Fiction** contains work from over forty writers and artists. The magazine-format book presents seventeen works of short fiction and a fantasy novella. It also includes eight poems and a five-page interview with Frederick Pohl. The writings are richly complemented by several collages, photographs and drawings. The cover, by Sam S. Adkins, is the perfect embodiment of the publication's diverse offerings.

Felix Gotschalk's "Dog's World," which details the adventures of an unusually intelligent and articulate canine, and Francis Matozzo's "The Fall of Ica," which examines the romantic urges of a blue-collar worker in an Orwellian setting, are notable pieces of fiction. Three other stories, by Janet Gluckman, David Bunch and L.A.P. Moore also attest to the overall excellence and balance of the fictional selections.

An obvious focal point of the collection is Ginger Curry's interview, "Frederick Pohl: The Space-Age Tiresias." In a wide, sweeping interview Pohl discusses writing habits, editing, SF women writers, nuclear families, scientists, etc.

The publication was professionally guided by Rose Sayre, who devoted two years to the project. Sayre has been associated with Pig Iron Press since 1975, and is also an artist. She was assisted by Dr. Mary Turzillo Brizzi, an associate professor at Kent State University, Warren, Ohio. Dr. Brizzi recently authored a critical study about Philip Jose Farmer, and is an associate editor for the critical SF journal, **EXTRAPOLATION**.

In "The craft of Science Fiction Writing," Jan Farrington writes, "Good science fiction excites and challenges the reader, gets the brain cells vibrating to the music of new ideas." The many new science fiction and fantasy writers and artists who contributed to **Science Fiction** certainly met Farrington's criteria.

- Fred F. Paulenich

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**THE VOID CAPTAIN'S TALE** by Norman Spinrad (Timescape Books, 1983, 250 pp., \$13.95)

In the second Starfaring Age, huge spacecraft are propelled by a star-drive device which works in conjunction with a human "sacrifice" called the Void Pilot. The Void Pilot must be a woman and a willing participant for the star-drive to work. Pilots are therefore the limiting factor in space travel, since willing females are hard to find. Travel between stars is accomplished through series of instantaneous jumps, which drain the Void Pilot's life force; Void Pilots therefore have short life-spans. If one dies in mid-jump, or jumps "blind", the spacecraft and crew are in big trouble.

It is the responsibility of the Void Captain to handle these situations, and try to make certain that blind jumps are not necessary. Traditionally, the Void Captain and Void Pilot of a craft never meet, much less become intimately involved. The Void Captain and Void Pilot in **The**

**Void Captain's Tale** are the exception to this rule, and as their relationship grows, complications emerge. The Void Pilot has discovered the Great and Only during jumps, and wants her lover, the Void Captain, to help her achieve permanent transcendental consciousness--which means she wants to jump blind. Will the Void Captain sacrifice ship and crew to help her?

The answer to that question is contained in the first paragraph of the first chapter of the book. This novel is indeed well written, but though the story gathers power chapter by chapter and steadily moves toward its climax, there is a lack of tension and surprise at the end of the novel, because Spinrad continues to write as if the reader doesn't already know how the story ends.

For me, this one mistake effectively ruined the novel. Not a bad book, but one that could have been much more effective.

- David Pettus

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**THE MAN WHOSE TEETH WERE ALL EXACTLY ALIKE** by Philip K. Dick (Mark V. Zeising, P.O. Box 806, Willimantic, CT 06226, 1984, ? pp., \$19.50 + \$1.50 postage & handling)

This is Dick's third mainstream work to be published. This novel was written in 1960, and explores the relationships between Leo and Janet Runcible and Walter and Sherry Dombrosio.

**Teeth** is primarily about Leo's emerging valor and integrity, and his human frailties. He is a Jew, and a realtor in Marin County, California. Walter lives next to Leo, and is an industrial designer in San Francisco. The story takes place around 1960, when it was written, when Walter takes his black auto-mechanic home for dinner. Two of Leo's clients resent the black man's appearance there, and Leo, who deplores racism, turns them out of his house. Leo then phones Walter to tell him that he is responsible for a loss of a sale. Later, Leo reports Walter for drunk driving; the feud is on.

Leo is shown as having a bad temper, holding a grudge, and being intellectually self-serving. His integrity surfaces in his hatred of racism, his support of his alcoholic wife, and his desire for the well-being of his town. Walter's manhood and pride, however, are threatened by Sherry. He achieves security by impregnating her by force. (Unlike Janet, who supports Leo, Sherry actively seeks her husband's destruction. Walter produces a false artifact to get revenge on Leo. This act of duplicity, however, leads to a discovery about the town's water supply which sets the stage for Leo's expensive act of self-sacrifice at the end of the book.)

Dick uses Walter as a foil to develop the theme of duplicity versus integrity. The true and the false--the caring and the uncaring--spiral around each other throughout the personal relationships. It is the integral truth in Leo's self-sacrifices that draws order out of chaos, and establish the main theme of the book: the individual is ennobled by acts of valor that go unnoticed by the world.

- Ed Burns

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**WHERE THE EVIL DWELLS** by Clifford D. Simak (Del Rey Fantasy Books, 1983, 249 pp., \$2.75)

Simak has long been underrated by the critics. Most of his work has been science fiction, but with this new book, Simak tests the waters of pure fantasy, and the results are pleasing.

The menace (the Evil of the title) is a blight that has covered the medieval land, which takes the form of all the grotesque creatures that man has ever imagined, from ogres to dragons. The action takes place in what appears to be an alternative world where the Renaissance flowered

very briefly and then went out. The civilized world is protected from the onslaughts of the barbarians by a buffer zone called the "Empty Lands" which are inhabited by the Evil and a handful of humans that have somehow survived. As the novel opens, there have been attempts by the Evil to cross the river which acts as a barrier to their incursions. An attempt was barely repulsed several years earlier. The fiance of Charles Harcourt, Eloise, was spirited away to the forbidden lands, her fate unknown. Charles, feeling that discretion is the better part of valor, does not plan to enter the Empty Lands after her until Fate intervenes. His uncle, Raoul, returns from the zone exhausted, white-haired, but alive. He tells of a giant prism contains the soul of a saint. It is coveted by the Church as a holy relic, and an ambitious local abbot insists that they try to recover it. Harcourt, the abbot and two others decide to chance the journey. One is a mysterious family retainer known as The Knurly Man who is only part human; no one knows what the other part is, but he has incredible longevity. The other is a girl named Yolanda, who is in search of her origins.

In a situation much like Harry Harrison's "Planet of the Damned," the four must confront peril after peril to reach the end of their quest. Even seemingly innocent unicorns turn homicidal. Simak shows a welcome light touch here and there, and despite the familiarity of the basic situation, enough character development and originality is shown to keep one reading at a steady pace. There are patterns that appear in some other Simak novels that are duplicated here: the pilgrims on a quest, the humanoid figure with intelligence, and the rural settings.

I believe readers will find this fantasy novel quite well done and entertaining. Perhaps not vintage Simak, but one of his better efforts nevertheless.

-W. Ritchie Benedict

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**THE DUNE ENCYCLOPEDIA**, compiled by Dr. Willis E. McNelly  
(Berkeley Books, 1984, 526 pp., \$9.95)

The *Dune Encyclopedia* is hundreds of pages of pure joy for Dune fans, trivia buffs and encyclopedia lovers. From "Abomination" through "Zensunni, History of" through the bibliographies, *The Dune Encyclopedia* is packed with stories, facts, glimpses of histories unwritten, and a side-view of the period in which it was written (before *Heretics of Dune*).

Included are biographies of Gurney Halleck, Thufir Hawat, Pieter deVries, Vladimir Harkonnen, and any other Dune character a reader might be interested in. There are complete descriptions of ornithopters, no-rooms, and Holtzmann generators. There is a chemical description of *melange*, the life-cycle of *shaihludata gigantica*, and the tune to which Gurney Halleck's bawdy song ("Galacian girls do it for pearls...") is set. There are hymns, folktales, recipes, costume hints, and lessons in Fremmen tongue and Old Galach.

The best part of the book is the view of ancient history it provides. For example, "...primitive nuclear weapons...invented on Old Terra by 'the raw Mentat', Einstein, who was working for House Washington...two of the first were used to settle a dispute with House Nippon." Or "One group (of the Bene Gesserit)...called themselves

Daughters...publicized their breeding charts, (and) bred male children for political office...trying to assert political claims by making their breeding charts the basis for social acceptability."

Do you want to know who sparked the Butlerian jihad? What great wrong was done Jehanne Butler by a self-programming machine? Who the first known Abomination was in Terran history? The code of honor of the Assassins Guild? For this information and much more, you can go to *The Dune Encyclopedia*.

- Patricia Matthews

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## White (Continued From Page 11)

position in the government, a high-tech career, and this man didn't believe me! He didn't believe something which I, in my naivete, thought **everyone** knew!

Naturally, the discussion widened and others jumped in. Most supported my position, but several sided with him. "See," he said, "you people have been conned. That's just what **they** want you to believe." His point of view is one which is quite popular in the top levels of the U.S. government these days. I found out subsequently that he also believes in astrology, "because, you know, no matter what you say about it, it **does** work." I hope astrology gives him comfort in his last days, and that those last days aren't shortly following a nuclear war.

We used to think we knew it all. Then we discovered how much we didn't know. Now the ignorant are using this as proof that we don't **need** to know and **can't** know how things really work; but it doesn't matter anyway if we put our faith in a superstitious belief.

Why do I feel all this is a precursor to a return to the Stone Age? Why do I feel that as much as we need to preserve the Child within us, we shouldn't turn our backs on adult maturity--and that for too many people this refuge in immaturity is what the return of fantasy has accomplished?

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## Thrust Awards (Continued From Page 20)

**Nominated but ineligible:** Star Trek II (1982), Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom (1984).

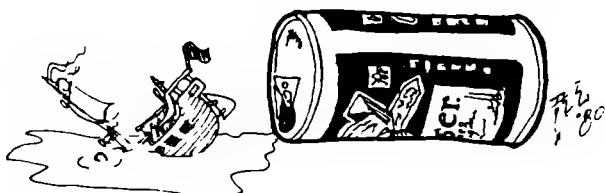
**Comments:** *Superman III* is this year's winner, although one could argue that it doesn't even fall within the SF genre at this point. But *Thrust's* readers were undoubtedly disappointed with the movies attempt at comedy. Coming close behind is the final highly contrived *Star Wars* episode. Third and fourth place were captured by two television attempts of very different nature, the unwatchably bad "*V*", and the controversial TV movie, *The Day After*, which somehow managed to put a remarkably ignorant American public into a short-term panic by portraying a full nuclear exchange as being almost as bad a World War II in Europe. Close behind in fifth place is *Brainstorm*, followed by *The Hunger* and *Twilight Zone - The Movie*. The only other two movies to draw more than one vote were *The Man With Two Brains*, an extraordinarily bad movie with marginal SF content, and Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, which I thought was (along with *The Dead Zone*) one of the most under-appreciated genre movies last year. The one surprise in this year's voting, to me, is that *Margames* got only one point. I thought the ending was ludicrously disappointing after a rather solid beginning.

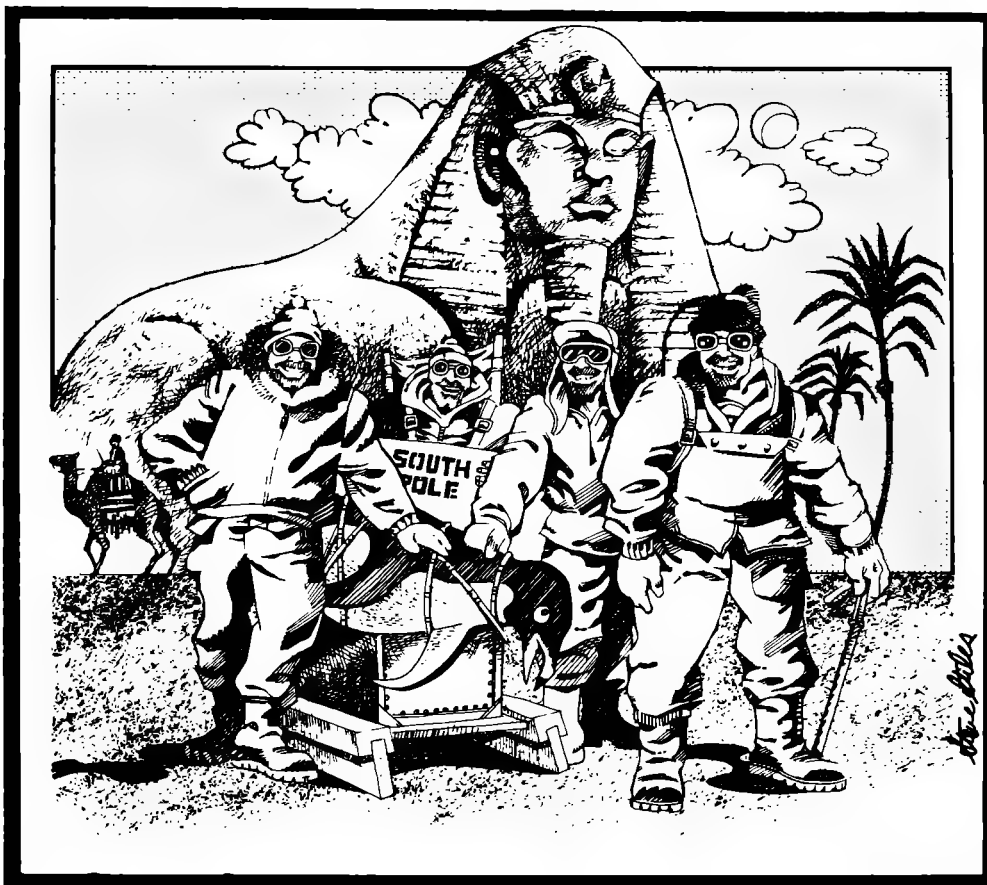
In all, 25 presentations were nominated (including two which were ineligible), again more than any other year. Nominations included 21 movies, two TV series, one TV miniseries, and one made-for-TV movie. Also, unlike previous years, all nine of the multiple vote-getters were major releases.

\* \* \*

Well, that's it for this year's awards. I hope we see even more ballots next year!

-DDF





David Bischoff  
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I enjoyed the entire issue of THRUST, but reading Gregory Feeley's piece concerning **The Last Dangerous Visions** did cause a negative reaction. I think his whole pretext is pretty ridiculous; it seems just an excuse to dredge up the LDV business simply to be nasty. I think that I can speak for the average SF reader in being disappointed that those three books have yet to be published after years of tantalizing announcements. But to portray the situation in the manner Feeley does is unnecessary and unconvincing. It seems to me that we can best speed the project along would be by being supportive rather than critical. There must be any number of good reasons why the anthology isn't out now. I'm sure that the man who would be made happiest by seeing its publication is Harlan himself. Rather than spend energy on hostile essays like "The Nursery Within the Last Dangerous Visions" and the recent piece in THE PATCHIN REVIEW, it seems to me that a respectful silence on the subject at this point would actually help the most in bringing the project to fruition. I see in the latest LOCUS that Harlan has been delivering a number of books lately to various publishers. Can LDV be far behind? With the market as it is now,

the publication of LDV could be a boon for the field. Publication of **The Last Dangerous Visions** now might call the attention of the many new SF readers to the more adventurous and literary qualities of which the field is capable.

As to the actual thesis of the essay, I can only say that, as a writer, I find ideas are plentiful. I am sure that all of the writers in LDV have continued their careers creatively unhampered by having one of their stories unavailable for expansion. Meanwhile, all we can do is to follow Milton's advice: "They also serve who stand and wait."

[Dave's letter was obviously written before the August issue of LOCUS appeared, with the startling news that Harlan Ellison has just broken out of **ten years** of massive writer's block, and is now working again and finishing up old projects, including **The Last Dangerous Visions**. Surprising news indeed! And good news too. I had no idea that Harlan has been having problems, apparently caused by a biochemical imbalance of some sort, leading to something called "endogenous depression". I certainly hope Harlan did not take offense to the article, since none was intended by me or, I'm sure, Greg Feeley. I now wonder if Charles Platt feels badly about the article he published, which

I'm not sure I would have, speculating about how many of the authors in LDV have pass away before the anthology is published, a problem about which Harlan feels very badly, according to the LOCUS story. As a fan of Harlan's work, I'm very glad to hear his problems have been overcome, and hope his cure is permanent. I'm sure most of THRUST's readers are looking forward to more Ellison than we've had in recent years. -DDF]

Harry Warner, Jr.  
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The new issue of THRUST contains a great deal of material which interested me greatly. The retrospective on Charles Hornig's life meant the most to me. The only fault that I can find with it is that Hornig doesn't boast enough about his years in the science fiction field to make younger fans aware of his importance to both fandom and prodom. For instance, he does not explain that THE FANTASY FAN became one of the most important fanzines in the early 1930s or that he continued to publish it after he became WONDER STORIES editor, producing eighteen issues from 1933 to 1935. There is nothing but silence about another pivotal event, the sponsorship of the Science Fiction League by

WONDER STORIES under his editorship. The SFL helped to bring many fans into contact with one another, created local fan clubs in many cities (one of which became the ancestor of today's LASFS), and set a pattern for prozine publicity for fans and fandom. In any event, I hope the article in THRUST will result in some major SF convention inviting Hornig to be a guest of honor.

I find myself in agreement with most of Robert Sabella's nominees for individuals with the greatest influence on science fiction. But unless Sabella intended to include only those who influenced the field for the better, I think Ray Palmer belongs among the top ten, because he was the first to prove that science fiction could attract a mass audience when written to the formula and standards of the pulps. Previously, SF editors and writers had attempted to create good science fiction, even though they didn't always accomplish it. Palmer showed how increased circulation could be achieved by inferior SF written for young people of very limited intelligence who made up so much of the pulp magazine industry's readership. The consequences were quick to follow in other prozines, later in much of the paperback SF, and most recently in the movies. STAR WARS is a descendent of the Palmer AMAZING, not of E.E. Smith's utterly different fiction. I would also rate H.L. Gold far above Boucher and McComas, placing him at least on the same plane as Campbell, and possibly higher. The best SF today shows more traces of the Gold GALAXY than of Campbell's ASTOUNDING /ANALOG. Gold is seriously underrated today, partly I suspect because his handicap prevented him from showing up at as many cons as did Campbell and because he alienated so many fans by refusing to include a letters section in GALAXY. Someone should do a long piece on the early GALAXY similar to the one Alva Rogers wrote on ASTOUNDING. Gold's prozine

did so much groundbreaking in liberating the field from old taboos and encouraging writers to break new ground in subject matter and treatment.

Regarding Green's article, one possible reason for the fondness of academics for older literature when they choose subjects for papers at the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts: all those little footnotes that writers of learned papers love so much. If a university professor decides to write a paper on a fantasy writer who has emerged in the past few years, he will suffer from a footnote famine. The only source he will be able to cite is the fiction itself, unless he has re-

ceived a fanzine or two reviewing the fiction. Academic papers without a couple of pages of footnotes and sources are as unthinkable as a convention without alcoholic beverages or a fanzine without staples. If the academic chooses as his subject an obscure fantasy short story by a 19th century literary great, he can relax and wallow in all the footnote possibilities inherent in dozens of books and other monographs on that particular writer. It doesn't matter if such sources have nothing to say about the particular story, because he can still find a way to slip in a footnote as proof he looked up that study on the writer. Remember the old adage: copying from one source is plagiarism, copying from two sources is research, and copying from three sources is a triumph of scholarship.

Jack Chalker's interview brought me up to date on a number of things I hadn't heard about since Jack has cut back his fan activity to sell professionally. I was particularly glad to find him praising Eric Frank Russell, one of my old favorites. The list of Jack's published fiction is impressive, but I found myself wishing it could have been just one line shorter with the time used for that writing being devoted to fanzine publishing. Jack published fine fanzines at one time, and I miss them.

All I could think about while reading Gregory Feeley's detective work on **The Last Dangerous Visions** was how much criticism poor T. O'Connor Sloane used to suffer when he held a story accepted for AMAZING two or three years before printing it. Harlan waits more than ten years to publish all of these stories, and little or nothing appears in print to complain about or criticize the inaction. Charisma is a wonderful thing.

---

**John J. Pierce**  
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I was intrigued by Janrae Frank's letter in the Summer '84 issue (#20). I gave up on the Gor books years ago, because I found the sexual fantasies not only offensive, but boring. I'm not sure I'd be willing to call them "innocuous," as Frank does. Some men may actually take them seriously, although I don't believe the typical SF reader does. (Someone once told me that Gor sells well in Moslem countries such as Malaysia.) I do agree with her other points. What irked me even more than the simple-minded reverse sexism of works like **The Female Man** was the distortion, unconscious or deliberate, of SF as a whole in the literary criticism accompanying such works. I'm not about to defend

the sexism or stupidity that characterized a lot of old-time SF, but I do resent the seeming assumption that, until the Great Revolution, writers and fans alike were rabid misogynists who dreamed of nothing but tying up and abusing women like the tarsmen of Gor. Let me try to illustrate the situation by parable: Imagine two identical small towns, seemingly solid middle class and conservative. Both are overwhelmingly white, with maybe a dozen black families. One fine spring day in both towns, a black man is observed walking down the street arm-in-arm with a white woman. In Town A, a lynch mob immediately forms. In Town B, nothing happens except acquaintances smile and wave hello. Although on the surface identical, these two towns are profoundly different. Science fiction is too often characterized as a Type A town, when it is actually a Type B. Strong female heroes and enlightened attitudes about women were unusual for a long time, for the obvious reason that SF's readership reflected a culture in which few women were supposed to be interested in the things SF was about; science fiction was a male preserve because its subject matter was so viewed. Yet when writers like Weinbaum and Schmitz went against tradition in emphasizing female heroes, nobody attacked them. Simak didn't suffer for making the know-it-all scientist in **Cosmic Engineers** a woman. Leigh Brackett, sometimes condemned nowadays as a collaborator with sexism, actually had her heroine make an explicitly feminist statement in "Black Amazon of Mars." Use of ambiguous names wasn't necessarily proof that readers would reject female writers, either: C.L. Moore used her initials to hide her identity, not from SF readers, but from the bank where she worked, and don't forget that magazines ran biographies of writers, so anyone who paid attention knew which sex the writers were.

Every movement, including feminism, must go through its "angry" stage. The mistake too often made is to accept the polemics of that stage as profound truth. Eventually, a real truth does win out: just last week, I was reading Elizabeth A. Lynn's **The Sardonyx Net**, which is certainly feminist in tone, but free of the simple-minded sexism that Janrae Frank rightly deplors.

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**Sharon Jarvis**  
Jarvis, Bruff Ltd.  
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Staten Island, NY 10314

Although it took you about eighteen months to tabulate the results of the 1982 Thrust Awards, I was still

gratified, and amused, to see the first seven books in the **Spaceways** series listed as runner-up for the worst novel of 1982.

In keeping within this honored tradition, I have created and packaged two more Adult Science Fiction series: **These Lawless Worlds** for Pinnacle and **The Alien Race** for NAL.

I'm sure you will be thrilled to receive copies of these new series as they are published.

[I'm glad you aren't taking your 7th place finish too hard. Having not read any of the **Spaceways** series, I really can't say whether it was or wasn't deserved. But the award was for the most **disappointing** novel, not the worst. And the series seems to have gotten less disappointing to THRUST's readers in 1983, since it garnered only one vote. Oh well, there's always next year... -DDF]

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Jessica Amanda Salmonson  
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Seattle, WA 98102

The article on **The Last Dangerous Visions** didn't mention that some of the stories will be **quaint** by the time they are published. I seem to recall Vonda N. McIntyre saying that her story was based on a scientific idea current when she wrote the piece, but which has been debunked in the meantime: so an up-to-date bit of speculative fiction has become perfectly dated. I would guess that a number of other tales may have become dated for one reason or another, particularly since much "futuristic" fiction in this field is so archly contemporary as to be old-hat before a magazine issue is off the stands! Perhaps Harlan is operating under the misguided notion that there is something of immortal quality in SF. No doubt the Utopian novelists and editors of the 19th Century felt that way about their stuff, too.

The **Thrust Awards** was not as much fun the second time around, like a good joke told twice in a row. The problem with the 1982 results is that most of the winning works really aren't all that bad; they're just run of the mill books, period. If the real stinkers would have won, though, feelings **would** be hurt, as it is only possible to get away with this for as long as it clearly has very little to do with objective reality. It is also just a list. Maybe I'm different, but lists have never intrigued me for their own sake. But seeing that whole books of lists have been published to good reviews, I could be alone in not appreciating such "non-book" books. You have created a "non-article" article with the **Thrust Awards** feature. Pabulum for the semi-literate. (Maybe

this is just sour grapes because I didn't even make runner-up in this year's poll.)

Reading the Michael Bishop interview I kept thinking, "Why not talk about the short stories? This is one of today's finest short story artists and all the interviewer wants to talk about are dorky old novels." But then after the interview is over, the author takes over interviewing himself, mostly about short stories! That boy knows what's good!

I presume that you've seen the first two issues of **LAST WAVE**. In Dozois' yearly recap of short fiction, he mentioned **every** story in #1, and reprinted Avram's in his year's-best anthology. The second issue went too far into the humor category, and the round-robin poetry crap, but if anything there was **more** experimenting with style than in #1. I'm eager to see #3. What with a number of small press magazines folding shop, it's nice to see something new, not merely filling a vacuum, but something different. I do think that what **LAST WAVE** is publishing is **fantasy**, not "speculative fiction," but I say that partly because I find SF putrid rot, whereas **LAST WAVE** is almost terrifyingly good. When Scott did the pre-publication publicity promising "THE PARIS REVIEW" of our field, I had my doubts; it's an easy thing to say to semi-literates who've never bothered to read **THE PARIS REVIEW**. But he's doing it right, and it would be nice to see this thing flourish.

**FANTASY BOOK** appears to flourish as well, though it hasn't been 100% hot potooties. I say this despite being a contributing editor who thinks highly of the magazine and is proud of my part in it. But I would like to see the artwork disappear entirely since they can't hold a high quality, and only one out of three stories are particularly good. That's better than the prozines' average perhaps, but nothing like **LAST WAVE**. I like to see the small press magazines filling a need for **narrative**

**art** rather than trying to pull a coup on Ed Ferman for commercially inclined stories. But the thing I started out to say is that **FANTASY BOOK** is going strong, and the death of **SHAYOL**, **RIGEL** and **STARSHIP** may not be a trend at all. The weak spot in most of these projects is that small press editors usually can edit, but they don't know how to sell. The folks at **FANTASY BOOK** are getting real distribution. I hope it all holds together for them.

And now you are promising a revitalized **THRUST**. Well, let's hope. It's hard to have a sense of continuity at such long intervals.

[Indeed it is, and continuity for a magazine is just as important for sales as it is editorially.]

I don't think you understand the nature and purpose I've intended for the **Thrust Awards**. One wouldn't expect obviously bad fiction to win. For a piece of fiction to be "disappointing", there must be high expectations. These expectations may be due to the author's past work, the publisher's packaging, or critical response (i.e. the book is critically "over-rated"). Truly bad books will not be **Thrust Award** winners because if the writer has no reputation, the packaging makes no pretensions, and reviewer response is negative or non-existent, how many people will read it and be disappointed?

As for **LAST WAVE**, I have enjoyed some of the stories there, but tend to feel that something important is missing in many of them. Just look at the first story in the first issue, "The Enormous Lover" by Steve Rasnic Tem, for instance. It is an interestingly written story about how a very large, naked woman, lying on her back, appears in a small town, and begins growing even larger. This has interesting emotional effects on the well-characterized protagonist. This rather fascinatingly Kafkaesque story simply ends with the sleeping, non-communicative woman becoming the



whole Earth's surface. When I got to the end of the story, I disappointedly asked myself, "What the hell have I just read here?" and had no good answer. On the other hand, Avram Davidson's "Full Chicken Richness" is a wonderful story, and one which, I believe, would have been right at home in an issue of FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION. I find it hard to imagine that Ferman could actually have rejected it. (Did he?)

As for FANTASY BOOK, I'm glad to hear it's doing well. And I think that its artwork has improved in recent issues. (Actually, I don't think I have the proper business spirit for a publisher; I'm always glad to hear that my competitors are doing well!)

So what's a hot potooties? - DDF]

**Arthur D. Hlavaty**  
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Durham, NC 27701

Shortly after I began reading con reports and going to cons, I decided that no two people ever attend the same con. So it was with the Conference on the Fantastic. Obviously, Terence Green and I attended two very different, though simultaneous, gatherings. Green's first Conference on the Fantastic, held in Boca Raton in March, 1982, was an unpleasant experience, one where a group of academics avid for publication gathered to deliver papers with funny and/or dirty titles, and ignored the writers. My first Conference on the Fantastic, held at the same place and time, was something quite different and more pleasant. Of course it is easy to attend different parts of a conference, since there are often 6-8 programs in a given time slot. As Green's list indicates, one who wanted to avoid the category of F/SF could easily do so. But I sought out sessions about F/SF and had little difficulty finding them. For instance, I very much enjoyed the paper entitled "Mussolini as Dante's Vergil: Anatomy of a Parody," which, as the astute reader may have guessed, dealt with Niven and Pournelle's *Inferno*.

Green offers a few Horrible Examples: an academic who showed insufficient interest in conversing with him, even though he was a fellow Canadian and wore a badge that identified him as a writer; a woman who had heard nothing about the F/SF genre. I could offer Good Examples: people with academic degrees who've been reading and loving the stuff since they were children, who sought out authors to talk to them. (For instance, I took part in a fascinating conversation with Brian Aldiss, instigated by one of those dread academics.) I don't think either

Green or I would be justified in saying that This Is The Way It Was. Green's main case seems to be that the Author's Readings were insufficiently attended. I suspect that they are also fairly ill-attended at SF conventions, where there are often fewer competing attractions. Unless the author is a skilled performer, like Harlan Ellison, I would rather assimilate fiction off the printed page than from the author's voice. I would rather hear discussion of a writer's work, by the writer or by others, than have it read aloud to me. And finally, I would rather hear about a writer I know and like, such as Delaney, Aldiss or Leiber (all of whom were at the conference and subject to papers I heard) than listen to a reading by a writer I've never heard of, a category I'm afraid that Terence Green falls into, even if his badge did say WRITER.

[It is indeed true that every person attends a different convention. Since I have never been to a Conference on the Fantastic, I can't compare it to others I have attended. If fact, I have been attending only the three local conventions for the last few years, and the Worldcon when I can. My six to eight conventions per year days are now long gone; there just hasn't been enough time in my schedule. As for author's readings, I find myself getting to only a few of them, even though I have enjoyed all those I have attended. The attraction for me is the chance to experience an author's work with him or her, and then discuss the hows and whys of the

story's creation. Unfortunately, an author's reading session is a calm, thoughtful period in the middle of a five-ring circus; I am usually much too hyperactive to be in the mood for such an activity during an SF convention. Sad but true. -DDF]

**Michael R. Wilson**  
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THRUST #20 was a good issue but for the glorification of Charles Hornig's life of shirking his obligations and responsibilities for an unproved theory (it certainly was not a belief) as to not wanting to kill or be a part of a group that does. How about an interview with someone who went to war? In fact, the Hornig interview/story went way beyond his "life in science fiction".

THRUST is a good magazine. Do try (as I know you are) to put it out more often, at least quarterly.

[I don't think Charles Hornig's article on his life in any way "glorified" his life. I found Charles' story surprising, interesting, and more than a little sad, but with the happy ending that after all of that he is content. In any case, THRUST has no policy or obligation for "balanced reporting". -DDF]

**We Also Heard From:**

**Joel West**, who conveys some of his study on fannish demographics;

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Geordie Howe, who praised the Hornig article, noting that he had no idea that the war resistance during World War II was so extensive, and noted that voting in the **Thrust Awards** is harder to vote in than the **Hugo Awards**;

Chet Twarog, who goes on at some length to condemn the "terminologic-

ally illiterates" who continue to use such terms as "sunrise" or the sun "going down" or earth/moon instead of Earth/Moon, in response to my letter in **SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW** #51... [I must admit, Chet, that I have a hard time getting excited about this issue...];

Brad Foster, who liked Greg

Feeley's article on **The Last Dangerous Visions**; and,

Hal M. Hall, who says that he would love it if **THRUST** would be monthly. [Sure, but he doesn't have to do the work to make it monthly!]

# THRUST BACK ISSUES

**Issue #8** (Spring 1977). Interview with Ted White; Ted White on sf art; Doug Fratz on sf comics; Dave Bischoff on the sense of wonder; a comic strip by Matt Howarth; Chris Lampton on the sf ghetto; book reviews.

**Issue #9** (Fall 1978). Interview with Norman Spinrad; "Why I am Not Announcing That I am Leaving Science Fiction" by Norman Spinrad; Ted White on Heavy Metal; Chris Lampton on breaking out of the sf ghetto; a comic strip by Steve Stiles; "Harlan, Come Home" by Charles Sheffield; "The Great Star Wars Debate" with Darrell Schweitzer, Ted White and Doug Fratz; a comic strip by Dan Steffan; David Bischoff on the relationship between sf and fandom; book reviews.

**Issue #10** (Spring 1978). "On The Future" by Isaac Asimov; interviews with literary agents Kirby McCauley and Henry Morrison; "The Easiest Way to Become a Great SF Writer" by Charles Sheffield; a comic strip by Derek Carter; Ted White on artistic creativity; Dave Bischoff on why he writes sf; Lou Stathis on being a reader for Dell Books; "Ten Stories Every Writer Must Write" by Steve Miller; book reviews.

**Issue #11** (Fall 1978). Interviews with Theodore Sturgeon, Joe Haldeman and C.J. Cherryh; Ted White on sf music; Charles Sheffield on the science in sf; Dave Bischoff on the need for outside literary influences on sf; John Shirley on winning sf awards; Lou Stathis on writing workshops; book reviews.

**Issue #12** (Summer 1979). Interviews with Fred Saberhagen and Octavia Butler; Ted White on animated fantasy movies; Charles Sheffield on the nature of the sf ghetto; David Bischoff on the New York City sf scene; Michael Bishop on the Gnomes book; John Shirley on paperback cover art; "The Making of Amazons" by Jessica Amanda Salmonson; Chris Lampton on the increased popularity of sf; Dan Steffan on sf&f art books; book reviews.

**Issue #13** (Fall 1979). Interviews with David Gerrold and Alexei Panshin; Marion Zimmer Bradley on rape in sf; Ted White on sf writing; a satirical look at sf criticism by Michael Bishop; Charles Sheffield on the virtues of amateurism, and professionalism; John Shirley on sf conventions; Dan Steffan on sf art; David Nalle on sf&f games; Steve Brown on the Campbell Awards; book reviews.

**Issue #14** (Winter 1980). Interview with J.G. Ballard; Barry Malzberg on his retirement from sf writing; Ted White on being editor of Heavy Metal; Michael Bishop on the humor of book blurbs; Charles Sheffield on the principles of sf writing; Dave Bischoff on the drama and catharsis of selling one's old sf books; John Shirley with an alternative sf convention; book reviews.

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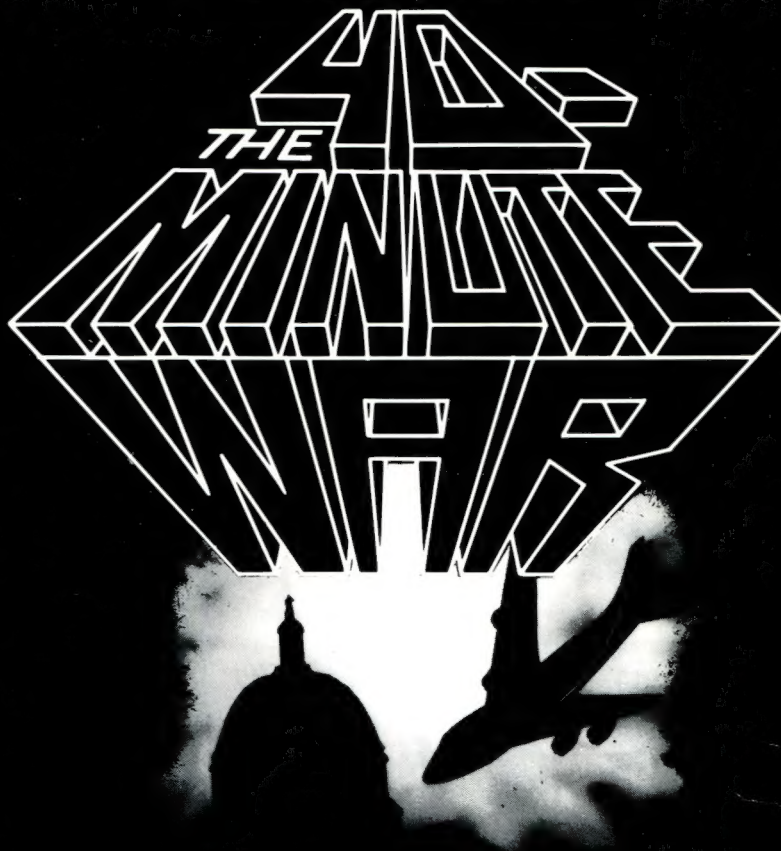
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